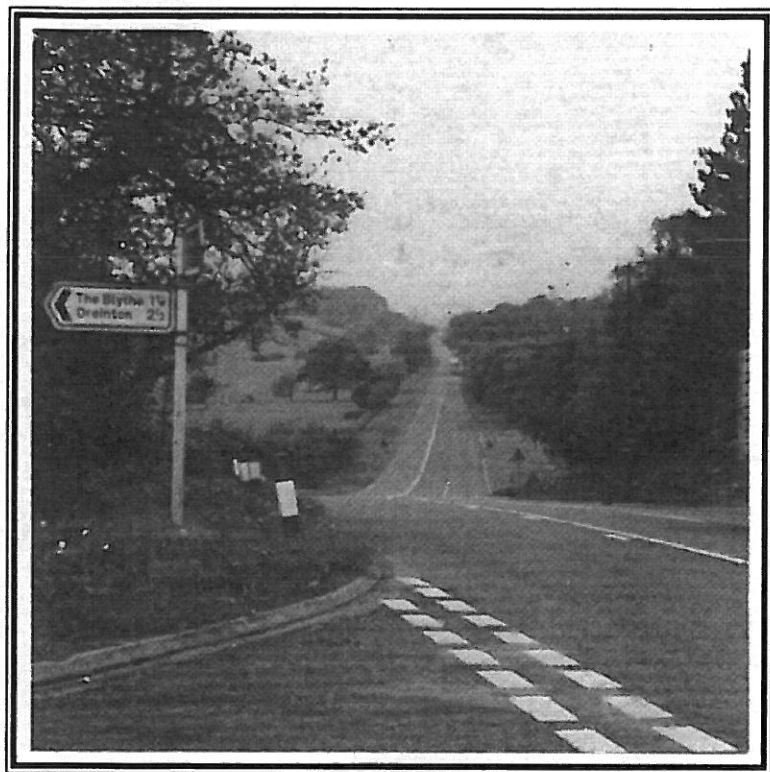


THE ROAD TO CHARTLEY



GHOSTS, LEGENDS & STORIES OF THE A518

PART 1
UTTOXETER TO CHARTLEY

JIM FOLEY

THE ROAD TO CHARTLEY

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UTTOXETER TO CHARTLEY

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FOREWORD

"Why write a book about a road?" was the inevitable question I was asked when I said I was compiling a book about the Stafford - Uttoxeter Road, the A518.

Every week-day for five years I travelled with my daughter Laura Jane the fifteen miles from my home in Uttoxeter to Walton on the Hill, Stafford where I worked and she went to school. In the evening we'd make the return journey back to Uttoxeter. Because of the nature of my work as a youth and community worker and my daughter's extra-curricular activities we'd sometimes do the return journey twice a day and I would quite often make the return journey three times a day - a total of ninety miles back and forth on the A518.

I soon got to know every bend, dip and hill on the road and over the years witnessed the road being changed and altered to straighten some of the more dangerous bends.

I became curious about some of the names of villages and hamlets I saw along the route - Abbots Bromley, Kingstone, Gratwich, Stowe by Chartley and Hixon.

I wanted to know more about some of the historical places along the road - Loxley Hall, Burndhurst Mill, Chartley Moss, Chartley Castle and Chartley Hall, Hixon Airfield, Weston Hall and Hopton Heath. Then there were the other places of interest like Amerton Farm, Weston, Salt, the County Showground and RAF 16 MU.

But for pure nostalgia there was nothing to beat tales of the old Stafford - Uttoxeter Railway Line - the Clog and Knocker.

Sometimes in the summer as I drove along I'd catch a glimpse of the setting sun through an archway across a field, sometimes it was noticing the straight lines of trees and undergrowth standing out from the green fields alongside the road and then drawing away into the distance that aroused my curiosity about the old railway line. I was determined to walk as much of the old line as was possible.

The A518 crosses rivers, canals and streams - the Blythe, the Trent and the Trent and Mersey Canal. I wanted to know where they started and where they ended their journeys.

Then there is the junction at Weston with the A51, an olden-day coaching route which by-passed Stafford, the bridge over the main railway line now carrying trains with the distinctive livery of Richard Branson's Virgin Rail. Poor old British Rail. R.I.P. 49 years old. Welcome 25 new operating companies.

Once I started speaking to people I uncovered a wealth of anecdotes, personal stories and local folklore. The story of the road began to unfold.

The pride of local people in their historical heritage was evident in their telling of the connections with the legendary figures of Robin Hood and Loxley, Elizabeth I and the tragic Mary Queen of Scots at Chartley and the romantic figures of the Earls of Essex and the Devereux of Chartley Hall.

A chance discovery of the story of the ghost of a woman in white near Weston Hall led me to even more intriguing stories of ghosts at the Hall.

After seven years of researching and collecting stories in my spare time I have found out more about the A518 and the surrounding countryside than most people would think possible.

I have enjoyed every minute of compiling this book. It has been a labour of love and I hope you will enjoy every minute you spend reading it.

If I had known before I started how many hours I would put into this book I've no doubt I would have been overwhelmed by it all and never started. In the end the problem became one of what to leave out because of the volume of information I had. I am sure that every time you read this book you will find something new.

The book has become so large I have had to bring it out in two parts. Part I covers the journey from Uttoxeter to Chartley. Part 2, which will be published later, will complete the journey from Chartley to Stafford. It's been a long journey but an enjoyable one. I hope you enjoy this first part of the book which starts at Wotoceshede or Wotoc's Heath, now known as Uttoxeter.

Stafford

July 1998

Reprinted Autumn 2002

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BACKGROUND

Soon after William the Conqueror of Normandy, France had defeated the Anglo-Saxon King Harold of England in 1066 at Hastings he set about establishing his rule throughout his newly conquered realm.

In reward for their services during the campaign he awarded his Norman earls and nobles the manors and lands of the defeated or dead Anglo-Saxon earls. Those Anglo-Saxons who swore allegiance to William were allowed to retain their lands on payment of a fine.

One of those Norman earls Henry, Lord of Ferrers and Chambrais was awarded Tutbury in 1071. Henry Ferrers eventually held over two hundred lordships mainly in Derbyshire but his main seat was Tutbury in Staffordshire where he had a castle built. Henry Ferrer's third son Robert Ferrers was created Earl of Derby in 1138.

Once William the Conqueror had asserted his authority he set about assessing the extent of his new kingdom and the taxable value of the land. William appointed Royal Commissioners to visit every manor and village in every shire in the land to assess their taxable value. They visited Uttoxeter - then called Wotoceshede - possibly meaning Wotoc's Heath. In the village of Uttoxeter there were twenty four villagers, eleven small-holders with eleven ploughs, There were sixty acres with land for ten ploughs, two lordships and one slave. There were sixteen acres of meadow and two leagues square of woodland. All this was taxable and spelt revenue for William. Uttoxeter's value before 1066 was £7 and in 1086 was £8 - obviously a lot of money nine hundred years ago. All this information is logged in the Domesday Book, William's record of every town and village throughout the land and completed in 1086.

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District of Uttoxeter

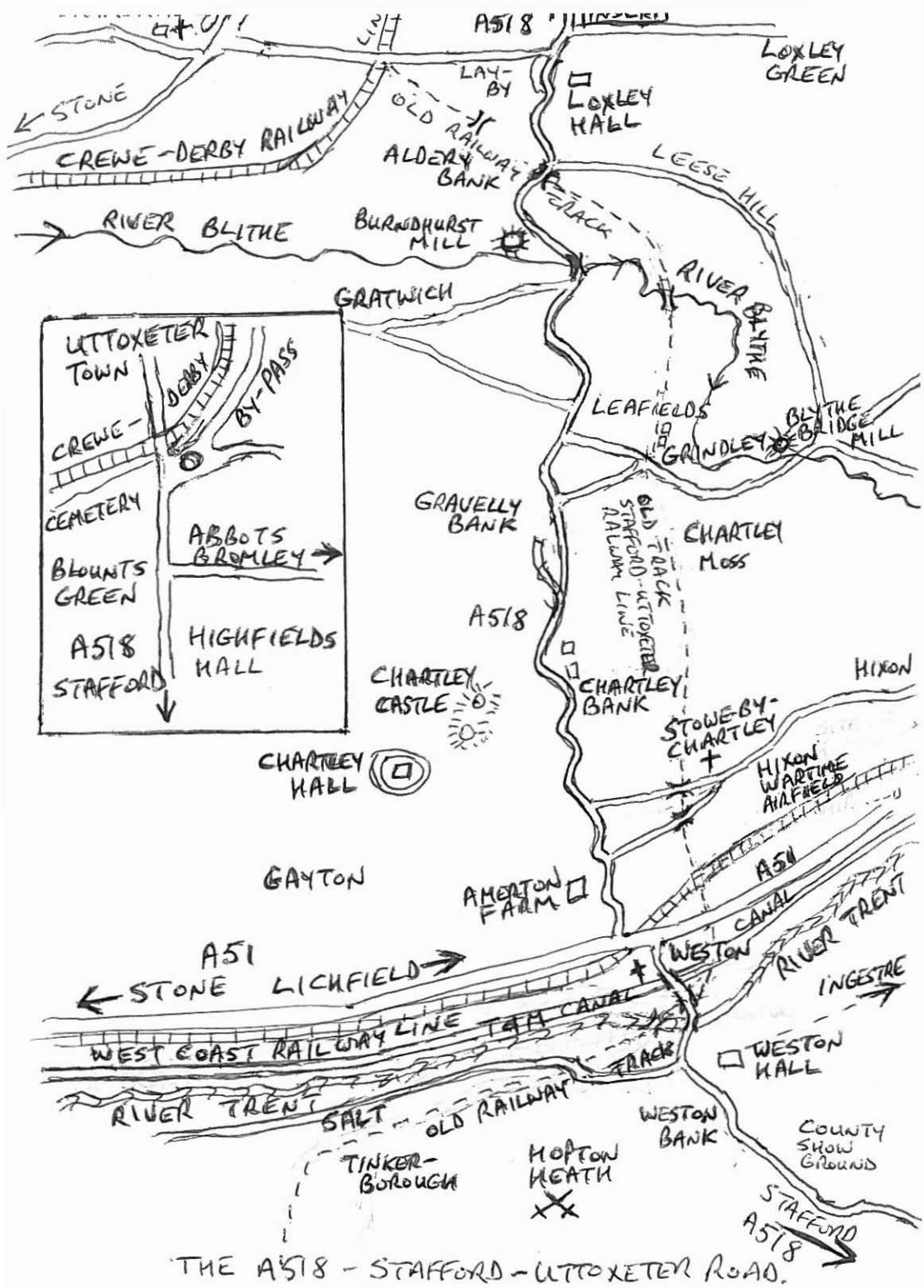
WARNING:

With a view to minimising the danger from raids by enemy air-craft, residents of Uttoxeter are requested to **REFRAIN FROM LIGHTING ALL OUTSIDE LAMPS** and to obscure as much as possible and practicable all lights in windows.

In the event of the approach of an enemy aircraft being observed, one of the Bells of the Parish Church will be rung in quick time, where-upon the Public are requested to put out all lights immediately, turn off all gas at the meter and remain indoors, preferably in the basements.

The observance of the above is most desirable in the public safety.

FRANK F. HAWTHORN.



Before the Norman invasion Uttoxeter had belonged to Alfgar, an Anglo-Saxon earl whose mother Lady Godiva, legend tells us, rode naked through the streets of Coventry. Earl Alfgar also owned about thirty other villages with their land including Rocester, Leek and Chartley.

Although the Normans brought with them the French language and their own legal and administrative systems they used most of the existing Anglo-Saxon system of local government. The shire system, which covered the whole of England, originated in Wessex in the late 9th Century. The shires were divided into smaller administrative units called Hundreds. The Shire of Statford or Stafford had five Hundreds - Uttoxeter was in the Totmonslow Hundred - Stafford was in the Pirehill Hundred. Burton upon Trent and Lichfield were in the Offlow Hundred and the Cuttlestone and Seisdon Hundreds covered the south west and south of the County.

The Normans introduced stone into building castles and churches. The Anglo-Saxons only had earthen ramparts or wooden forts. In about 1080 the Tower of London was built by William to defend that city. Later Normans built their own castles to protect their lands and to assert their authority. It wasn't just the threat of the Anglo-Saxons but also possible Danish invasions and even rivalry from their fellow Normans.

As earlier stated, one of the De Ferrers, possibly William Ferrers, built himself a stone castle at Tutbury. Earl Ranolph de Blundeville, sixth Earl of Chester in 1220 built Chartley Castle. He also built two sister castles, one at Beeston in Cheshire and the other at Bolingbroke in Lincolnshire. Often these stone castles were built on or near existing Anglo-Saxon earthen forts or strongholds. One wonders if the stone for these local castles came from Hollington where stone is still quarried today, or Weston Bank where a quarry existed until quite recently.

Stafford Castle was constructed over a hundred years later by Ralph, 1st Lord Stafford.

Apart from their castle-building we should be eternally grateful to the Normans for the wonderful churches they built and for the monasteries they founded throughout the land. The Cistercian abbey at Croxden was built by French monks who introduced sheep farming to the area as it had never been imagined possible. They also brought with them good horticultural practices from the more diverse mainland of Europe.

The Norman churches at Checkley, Draycott in the Moors and Dilhorne are jewels of architecture of that period. They are taken for granted by locals and are more admired by visitors.

Undoubtedly the stone for building the churches in the area would have come from Hollington quarry but I never cease to wonder how nine hundred years ago they cut the stone, transported it and then raised it up, block by block, to build those magnificent churches. People had faith and as the saying goes, "Faith can move mountains."

Before I move on I must mention the wonderful Norman church of St. Chad's in Stafford. If it or any other of Staffordshire's Norman churches were in London they would be full of sight-seers. Perhaps it's a blessing in disguise that people do take them for granted.

Centuries ago the pace of life was much slower, governed by the hours of daylight, the weather, church liturgy and festivities, the lord or master you worked for and the number of mouths you had to feed. There were no pensions so people worked until they dropped.

Sundays were welcome days of rest spent in church, at play and with the family. Holy days were days of great festivity and a respite from the hard grind of work in the fields. Winter months were long and cold but winter was also time to catch up on repairs. People went to bed early to keep warm and there wasn't much else to do. It would be many centuries before the cycle of village life changed. When it did change it was slow and imperceptible, unlike today when because of rapid technological advances our way of life, our values and perceptions and our expectations, and others expectations of us, are changing almost day by day. As farming methods improved trade slowly developed and transport also slowly evolved. The need for better roads to transport goods increased. Towns grew and created a need for food and commodities which in turn created the need for better roads to carry the goods quicker.

As we go on our journey from Uttoxeter to Stafford we will look on the way for the old country lanes which once made up this road. From a number of small country lanes linking one village with another they have all now been straightened out to make one very fast road which carries thousands of vehicles per day. Whereas in the past carts trundled along at 2 or 3 m.p.h. cars, coaches and heavy goods vehicles now travel at such fast speeds and their drivers are so intent on reaching their destination that they are totally oblivious to the rich traces of history so visible to anyone with the time and the interest.

In the Middle Ages people walked everywhere, apart from the nobility who travelled on horseback. The country was criss-crossed by footpaths, usually following the high ground to avoid the valleys, which were often boggy, and the dense forests, like the Needwood Forest and Cannock Chase which then covered most of the country. Most of the paths linked settlements and remote hamlets but some were long-distance paths and linked one part of the country with the other - a bit like motorways today.

The Staffordshire Way could have been a long distance path going from Mow Cop to Kinver Edge - a distance of ninety miles. It passes near Rocester which a millenium and a half ago was a Roman settlement. On Ordinance Survey maps an old Roman road is shown going from Rocester through Hollington where it kept to the high ground. Descending to Tean it continued through Draycott to Chesterton, another Roman settlement near Newcastle. From Chesterton it continued to Middlewich, a salt-producing area. From there it went on to Chester, an important Roman stronghold and seaport.

In Saxon and Norman days travel between Uttoxeter and Stafford would have been very limited. Travelling would have been hard work and dangerous.

Apart from thieves and vagabonds there was the danger from wild animals such as wolves, boars, deer and possibly even bears which freely roamed the Needwood Forest.

About eleven miles south-west of Uttoxeter near Rugeley is the ancient family estate and home of the Wolseley family. Legend has it that the Wolseleys were awarded 1,300 acres of land by King Edgar of Mercia in 975 for driving out wolves from the county.

The family's coat of arms depicts a wolf's head. Ironically the wolf is metaphorically back at the door of the present baronet, Sir Charles Wolseley. This time it is in the shape of his bankers. Because of a business venture that went wrong - a large garden centre at Wolseley Bridge built in 1989 - the baronet has had to sell off his estate and he may even lose his family home. The Wolseley's family motto, "Homo Homini Lupus" - "Man is as wolf to his fellow man", has a certain irony about it. I would like to add my own Latin quotation - "O tempora. O Mores" which roughly translated means, "It's a sign of the times."

To go back to the original thread of the dangers of travel, most people would have been frightened by the fear of the unknown heightened by the tales brought back by travellers and pedlars. There were no proper roads and no maps. People lived insular lives. It is not surprising that in this kind of social climate superstition thrived. Peasants and nobility alike would have felt secure in the conformity and security of the Church with its values and rituals and promises of a better life hereafter.

When prayers didn't work many people turned to witchcraft and sorcery. Casting spells and making magic potions became big business and led to the Church persecuting the witches; most of them were charlatans preying on the gullible. When the wife of the third earl of Essex found herself a lover she turned to a sorcerer to try and get rid of her husband.

In Winter heavy snow and freezing weather would have made travel on foot or by horse and cart impossible. When the rivers Blythe, Trent and Dove were in flood the surrounding meadowland would have been covered in water and the normal crossing points or fords would have been impassable. Travellers would have had to have made long detours. Uttoxeter would probably have been cut off for quite long periods in the winter.

WOLSELEY OF WOLSELEY.



IN THEIR MEMORY

Often as I drive along the A518 I note the small wooden crosses by the roadside each one marking a life lost in a road accident. Sometimes there are two crosses. Each year flowers and cards appear to mark individual anniversaries of the tragic deaths of loved ones. Each cross represents a personal tragedy and loss for a family somewhere whose life has been changed for ever by a sudden and violent death.

In this book where I have known of a tragedy I have included a brief memorial to that person and where possible I have given the name. I think the idea of a National Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims as established by the Charity Road Peace is an excellent one. I do believe that all churches and other places of worship should hold services on that Sunday in November for those who have died on our roads.

Road Peace, a national Charity, was established in 1992 to represent and give support to bereaved and injured road traffic victims. Bridget Driscoll was the first person to be killed by a car in Britain in 1896. Since then thousands of people have died on Britain's roads, in cars, lorries and coaches, pedestrians, cyclists and motor-cyclists, travelling on tractors, vans, mini-buses. Hundreds die every year and many thousands are injured. In 1996 72 people were killed and 561 were seriously injured on Staffordshire roads. 4,050 people suffered a slight injury but what is not recorded is the shock and depression they suffered.

Road Peace is constantly looking at ways to reduce accidents - there are 5 million crashes every year in Britain - through better education and stricter law enforcement.

The Sunday following Remembrance Sunday is now established as European Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims.

In 1998 it falls on Sunday, 17 November.

UTTOXETER - JOURNEY'S START

We start our journey in Market Place, Utoxeter which over the years has been a focal point for much of the history of the town and its hinterland.

Uxeter, Utcheter or Utoxeter has records of a market here since 1252 when the Lordship of the Manor of Utoxeter was granted by King Henry III to William de Ferrers, Earl of Derby whose main residence, as we said earlier, was Tutbury Castle. Although the de Ferrers forfeited Tutbury Castle and their revenue from Utoxeter market in 1266, because of Robert de Ferrer's part in the Barons' Rebellion against Henry III, the name of the Ferrers family is inextricably linked with the area for the next seven hundred years. Loxley, Chartley, Shirleywich and Weston are all associated with the family as we shall see later.

Henry III gave Tutbury Castle to his own son Edmund who became Earl of Lancaster. When Edmund's descendant Henry of Bolingbroke became Henry IV Tutbury thereafter became part of the Duchy of Lancaster and has belonged to the sovereigns of England ever since.

Francis Redfern, Utoxeter's historian, believed that Queen Elizabeth I travelled to Chartley from Utoxeter in 1575 where she was a guest of the Earl of Essex for ten days. The roads in those days would have been full of pot-holes and Elizabeth's retinue of carriages and carts carrying her belongings, her ladies in waiting and all her staff, including cooks, physician, secretaries and advisers, would have had to travel slowly. She herself would have travelled on horseback with her armed escort and would have been preceded the week prior to her visit by carts containing the necessities for settling in to Chartley as soon as she arrived there, including bedding, furniture and furnishings.

In his History & Antiquities of Uttoxeter published in 1886 Redfern tells us about an ancient fosseway through Loxley Park.

"There is an antique fosseway through Loxley Park from the direction of Uttoxeter, and it was doubtless over this way that Queen Elizabeth in 1575, and King Charles twice in the subsequent century, passed to Stafford. In or about the year 1772 a petition to Parliament was presented for the improvement of this road, and as it gives a striking picture of the fearful state of one of the most primitive roads then existing, a transcription of it, whether it was an old Roman way or not, cannot fail being welcome.

"To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of several Gentlemen, Clergy, Freeholders of the County of Stafford of the Mayor, Gentlemen, Tradesmen, and Inhabitants of the Borough of Stafford, in the County of Stafford, and of the Gentlemen, Tradesmen and Inhabitants of Uttoxeter, in the said County of Stafford, sheweth:- That the road leading from the said Borough or Town of Stafford to the Town of Uttoxeter aforesaid, is in many parts thereof become so very deep and foundrous, that during many months in the year the same is very inconvenient and dangerous for horses, and nearly impassible for carriages, and in many places so very narrow that carriages cannot safely pass each other, and in time of floods the overwhelming of the rivers Trent and Blythe renders the passing so extremely dangerous as to stop all communication between the said Town of Stafford and the said Town of Uttoxeter, without going many miles about. And the said road cannot be kept in repair by the ordinary methods prescribed by law.

And your Petitioners further shew that the repair of the said road will be of great public utility, as thereby a free and open communication will be obtained between the Town of Shrewsbury and the Towns of Derby and Nottingham, nearly in a direct line, by means of turnpike roads.

Your Petitioners therefore pray that leave may be given to bring in a Bill for more effectually repairing, widening, turning, altering, amending and keeping in repair the said road. And also for building bridge or bridges over the rivers Trent and Blythe, so as to render the passing over the said rivers safe and commodious to travellers, with such powers and authorities and under such regulations as to this Honourable House shall seem meet."

King Charles I stayed in Uttoxeter on a number of occasions in the early 1600's. He often hunted in the Needwood Forest which at that time covered a wider area than it does today. Uttoxeter would have been a good base for a day's hunting. On his last visit in 1645 Charles I charged the townspeople £1.6.8d. for a hogshead of beer as well as other charges for the privilege of having a royal visit.

During the Civil Wars, 1642 - 1652, Uttoxeter changed hands several times but was mainly held by the Parliamentary forces under Cromwell. It was at Uttoxeter that the royalist Duke of Hamilton surrendered to Cromwell's General Lombard after retreating from the Battle of Preston in 1648. The Royalist soldiers were held prisoner in various local churches and caused quite a lot of damage to the parish church of St. Mary's during their imprisonment there. Some of these prisoners were sent to the plantations of Virginia and Barbadoes where they ended up as good as slaves.

In 1780 the seventy year old Dr. Samuel Johnson, to whom the first dictionary is attributed, stood in the pouring rain in Market Place, Uttoxeter to atone for an act of pride he had committed fifty years before.

Samuel's father Michael Johnson ran a book stall at Uttoxeter Market. One day when he was too ill to run the book stall he asked his son Samuel to look after it for him. Looking after a book stall on Uttoxeter Market was beneath the dignity of Samuel Johnson. The stone kiosk with its mural depicting the scene marks the spot in Market Place where Dr. Johnson, by this time a renowned national scholar, stood to do penance for his youthful arrogance. The message in many of Johnson's literary works, including his novel *Rasselas*, is about the vanity of human wishes and the impossibility of human happiness in an imperfect world. That message couldn't be more true in today's competitive society.

Every year, usually on the last Thursday in September, the Mayor and citizens of Uttoxeter mark the occasion of Dr. Johnson's penance with a wreath-laying ceremony at the kiosk in Market Place. An academic or well-known literary person is invited each year to perform the ceremony.

In the seventeenth century Uttoxeter was a prosperous market town. Its location near the rich pasturelands of the rivers Dove, Tean and Blythe was central in Uttoxeter's growth as a dairy and cattle market. London butchers and buyers from the London dairies travelled to Uttoxeter Market to purchase large numbers of cattle and large quantities of dairy products for the growing London market. Uttoxeter was renowned for its butter and cheese. A market in earthenware pots was created to transport the dairy products.



Act of penance by Dr Johnson is recalled

CHILDREN and civic leaders gathered to celebrate the birth of Dr Samuel Johnson and his act of penance.

The annual ceremony took place in Uttoxeter Market Square where Johnson's father ran a bookstall in the 18th Century.

The Mayor of Uttoxeter Shirley Powell is pictured placing a wreath on the market square memorial. Looking on are pupils from Alleyne's High School, the Rev Peter Jones, and the Town Crier.

Photo: TED BLACK

Robert Plot, the Staffordshire historian, on a visit to Uttoxeter Market in 1680 commented on "the pots made at Burslem in the Potteries of a long and cylindrical form to transport the cheese and butter. The London buyers had an instrument called an auger or butter bore which they pushed right to the bottom of the pot to test the quality of the butter or cheese at the bottom. It wasn't unknown for dealers to put the best quality butter at the top and the lower quality at the bottom."

The pots would then be transported to the London market by pack horse which travelled in trains of twenty or more and travelled sometimes day and night at a steady speed of 3 m.p.h.

Pack horses were the main means of transport over long distances from the middle ages until the arrival of the canals and the railroad. Originally used for carrying salt in panniers on either side of the horse or pony, over the ages they carried coal, stone, cloth, wool, malt and who knows what else? On their long distance journeys they might meet the itinerant pedlar or chapman who sold everything from a button to a pot. The chapman would have been a welcome sight in Uttoxeter in the middle ages. The pack horse train followed a lead pony all travelling in single file. The lead pony carried bells attached to its harness to warn other travellers of the approach of the train.

The cattle sold at Uttoxeter Market would have been taken in large herds by drovers across country to the London cattle market at Smithfield.

During the reign of Elizabeth I drovers had become so numerous that laws were brought in to control them. A drover had to be thirty years old, a married householder and his licence signed by three Justices of the Peace, renewed every year. Drovers also became message carriers and even bankers. Cattle were often shod to protect their feet for the long journey. Geese were made to walk through a mixture

of tar, sand and sawdust. Usually the drovers and their charges would cover twelve miles in a day with a day of rest where there was suitable grazing, which often cost $\frac{1}{2}$ d. or 1d. per beast. With the growth of the railways and quick transport droving gradually disappeared.

Just as recently the Toyota factory at Burnaston created work for smaller subsidiary suppliers as far away as Stoke, so the Uttoxeter Market created jobs for local businesses - shop keepers, public houses, tailors, farriers, millers, the leather and shoe industry. The town's iron foundry produced iron to make ploughs, shears, horse shoes etc.

Many years later buyers from the London dairies would still be visiting Uttoxeter to buy milk from local farmers. The milk would be taken by train in milk churns on the old Clog and Knocker to Derby and from there to the London dairies.

In 1945 a company now renowned throughout the world had its uncertain beginnings in Uttoxeter. Joseph Cyril Bamford, whose initials make up the famous JCB logo, tried to sell his first product at Uttoxeter Market - a re-vamped trailer for £90.

He failed to find a buyer. Eventually Joe Bamford sold the trailer for £45 in part-exchange for an old cart.* He did up the cart and sold that a week later at Uttoxeter Market for £45. Joe Bamford had taken the first step in what was to become an earth-moving experience.

In 1996 JCB and Joe Bamford's family were the 10th richest family in the United Kingdom. They were richer than the Queen - quite an achievement in fifty one years. The Windsors have been around much longer and besides they inherited their wealth.

* Joe Bamford sold that first trailer to a Mr. Slater, farmer of Hill Green Farm, Tean. His daughter Mrs. I. Bentley still lives at the farm with her farmer husband Ivan Bentley, a cousin of Tom Goode's wife. The Bentleys still have a memento of that first sale - a miniature gold-plated digger - presented to them by JCB a few years ago, Mr. Slater having died some time ago.

THE SENTINEL, Friday, August 29, 1997



● Mr Hawley presents the Queen's Award to Sir Anthony, centre, and Neil Bedford, managing director of the backhoe loader division. Photo: TED BLACK



Founder's initials are world famous

THE world famous JCB logo first appeared back in 1953 on the JCB Loadover.

JCB are the initials of the company's founder, Joseph Cyril Bamford.

The logo was based around the side swath bar of the 1951 JCB Hay-Mower, the shape of which meant the letters were all of different heights.

First trailer was sold for £45 part exchange

THE history of JCB goes back 50 years to 1945, when Joseph Cyril Bamford left the family firm of Bamfords Ltd, Uttoxeter and on the day his first son, Anthony (now Sir Anthony) was born, set up in business on his own as an agricultural engineer.

He bought a second-hand welding set and rented a small garage for 30 shillings (£1.50) a week to launch his business.

The first JCB product was an old farm trailer which Mr J C Bamford built using war surplus materials, painted, and offered for sale at Uttoxeter market for £90. Unfortunately, no-one was interested and later it was sold for £45 and an old trailer was taken in part exchange!

Mr Bamford set about renovating the trailer he accepted in exchange and later this was also sold for £45.

In 1946, the first JCB four-wheeled trailer was built and Joe also started

dealing in reconditioned second-hand ex-Ministry vehicles which were in very great demand at that time.

JCB by now had outgrown the small garage and moved to an old coach house block at Crakemarsh Hall, between Uttoxeter and Rocester.

Here they started to build 'Screw-type' tipping trailers with materials salvaged from dismantled air raid shelters.

Mr Bamford was now employing Arthur Harrison and Bill Hirst, along with several part-time workers.

By 1948 Mr Bamford was building hydraulic tipping trailers out of materials salvaged from Anderson air raid shelters; he also started refurbishing wartime Jeeps, adding wooden bodies (supplied by a local undertaker!) to turn them into shooting brakes.

After recognising the possibilities of hydraulic rams for lifting and lowering, Joe designed and produced the 'Major Loader' in 1949 for fitting to Fordson E27N and Nuffield Universal tractors - it was the first industrial hydraulic front-end loader in Europe.

During the years the colours of major JCB products have changed - until 1950 products were all turned out in dark green.

The official livery then changed to red and by 1954 it had changed again to Cardinal Red and from 1957 the colour bright yellow was adopted, though the shade of yellow is now darker than the original.

In the late 1940s, Mr Bamford was working flat out, seven days a week to produce the trailers and loaders, as demand was out-stripping manufacturing capacity.

His landlady from Crakemarsh Hall disapproved of Sunday working, so he moved to the small village of Rocester into a former cheese factory and pig farm.

The building and outhouses were converted into an ideal workshop and outside storage yard, which has, over the years, expanded to become the present-day factory complex.



Joe Bamford and the 50 shilling welder that was JCB's first capital investment.

At the corner of Carter Street and High Street, Uttoxeter is a shop which keeps changing hands. Recently it has been turned into a restaurant, "The Goldfish Bowl". At one time Elkes Tea Rooms were here. Out the back they made bread and biscuits. The tea rooms are gone but Elkes Biscuit Factory on Cheadle Road, Uttoxeter produces 2.4 million biscuits a week in over thirty varieties. The most popular biscuit at the moment is the Malted Milk biscuit. Elkes exports biscuits to Europe, Scandinavia, Russia and Australia. Elkes is now part of Northern Biscuits Ltd.

THE SENTINEL, Saturday, July 5, 1997

Biscuit firm makes a crumb more in their year's profits

THE PARENT group of Elkes Biscuits factory in Uttoxeter has announced a small rise in profits for 1996-97.

Northern Foods revealed in its annual report pre-tax profits of £127.1 million, up £2.9 million or 2.3 per cent on the previous year.

The Prepared Foods part of Northern's operation, which includes Elkes Biscuits, saw a 19.7 per cent rise in operating profits to £98.6 million.

Chairman Christopher Haskins said: "The group achieved modest overall profit growth in both halves of the year. The Prepared Foods division increased its operating profit, despite an estimated £5 million impact from

By Michael Howard

BSE, as we continued to increase sales to the major retailers, to rebuild margins and to reap the planned benefits of investment and reorganisation.

Elkes Biscuits employs 1,600 people at its Cheadle Road base making cream biscuits and multi-packs.

Northern recently announced a £12 million investment in a new automated manufacturing process at the factory.

Group turnover for the year was £1,884 million, down 3.3 per cent on 1995-96, but Prepared Foods turnover was up 4.2 per cent to £1,094 million.

No local historian writing about Uttoxeter can possibly do so without referring to the town's main historian Francis Redfern whose History & Antiquities of Uttoxeter (1865) took him twenty seven years to research and is still the main history of the town and the surrounding villages.

Francis Redfern who was born at Tissington in 1823 is buried in Uttoxeter Cemetery next to the Stafford road. He died in 1891. On his tombstone are the words, "That ye may tell them that come after."

Not far away in the same cemetery is the grave of W.G. Torrance, a retired schoolmaster who wrote a series of ten booklets entitled "Following Francis Redfern" which updated Redfern's book, and using more recent research corrected some of his mistakes. W.G. Torrance died in the 1950's.

Mary Howitt, the Uttoxeter poet and novelist, is perhaps best known for her poem about the spider and the fly.

Uttoxeter is a stopping off point for many tourists and day trippers on their way to the Peak District, Alton Towers, Adam Bede Country, Rocester and the Potteries to name a few places of interest within twenty miles of the town. Does anyone know where Uttoxeter Tourist Office is? It's a sad little office - the staff though are extremely helpful and friendly - a long way from the town centre. I am sure that more tourists go to the Heritage Centre in Carter Street. It really is a poor show for Uttoxeter. If you visit Leek you can't miss the tourist office in the Market Place. Why can't Uttoxeter have a shop front equal to that?

Under Peter Nixon and his band of volunteers Uttoxeter Heritage Centre, once the home of the town's historian Francis Redfern, does a good job in promoting Uttoxeter's heritage.

Local man John Walton deserves praise and recognition for his determined efforts to start a Museum of Uttoxeter. His semi-detached home in Uttoxeter is full of Uttoxeter memorabilia. Let's hope that one day John will realise his dream.

UTTOXETER RACECOURSE

There has been racing recorded in the Uttoxeter area on and off since 1720. Originally race meetings were held at Netherwood. There is uncertainty as to the whereabouts of Netherwood which means Lower Wood and as there is a Highwood one could assume it was not far from there. Jim Cane of Uttoxeter said he once saw an old map of Uttoxeter and on it the racecourse was situated near Noah's Ark Farm, at the bottom of Redhill, Doveridge.

According to W.G. Torrance in his booklets, 'Following Frances Redfern', racing also took place at Lambert's Park Farm, Byrds Lane and also at Bramshall where the start of the race was opposite the Butcher's Arms Inn. In those days it was across fields and over hedges and undoubtedly tough going. Uttoxeter Racecourse opened on its present site in 1907. Then there were five race days a year, now there are twenty fixtures per year.

During the Second World War the course was requisitioned by the Government for the War Department. It was only re-opened again in 1952.

It was Stan Clarke C.B.E. who put Uttoxeter on the map for the horse racing fraternity ever since becoming the majority shareholder in 1988. Using the business expertise gained in setting up the very successful building firm - St. Modwen Properties - Stan Clarke transformed Uttoxeter Racecourse. Over £4.5 million was ploughed into the course with £2 million being spent on the new grandstand officially opened by Prince Edward in 1994.

Uttoxeter Racecourse has twice been voted Regional Racecourse of the Year. Each year it hosts the Midlands Grand National and many of the course's fixtures are televised by Channel 4. Average attendance on race days is 6,000 with 12,000 attending on special days.

All Our Yesterdays

Wednesday, November 11, 1987

Plans to privatise part of Uttoxeter Racecourse could raise about £500,000, councillors have been told.

Owners of the National Hunt racecourse, East Staffordshire District Council, want to see the track run by a private company.

Private investors would own a 49-per-cent stake of the shares, but the local authority would remain in control with 51 per cent of the shares. The company would rent the course from the council for about £40,000 a year.

Members of the council's review committee heard that the badly-needed cash injection would be used to improve the course.



Thousands of racegoers from all over the country must bless the day that Uttoxeter by-pass was finally opened. They no longer have to endure the nose to tail queues through Uttoxeter streets.



Uttoxeter High Street in the days before modern traffic and the need for a by-pass. The only danger was on market days if a bull escaped. In recent years the High Street was a dangerous place, especially on Saturdays with crowded narrow pavements and large lorries passing very close to the pavements. It was a wonder there weren't more accidents. You took your life in your hands trying to cross the road.

Uttoxeter, Advertiser, Wednesday, May 27, 1998

Towers slips to second

Alton Towers has lost its place as top of Britain's tourist attraction table.

The theme park near Uttoxeter has been replaced at the head of the league by London's Madame Tussaud's Waxworks.

Tussaud's (2,798,801 visits in 1997) had been second to Alton Towers (2,701,945 visits), part of the Tussaud group, for the past five years.

£10m new road is opened



Ready to set the traffic rolling are county Councillor Janet Dean and Councillor Shirley Powell, Mayor of Uttoxeter

Before bidding farewell to Uttoxeter I must say a word about Uxonians as well as the people from surrounding villages. It would be hard to meet a more friendly and helpful people. Having lived in London and abroad for many years it was quite a shock to be called 'Duck' by a Uttoxeter shopkeeper. At first I thought he was a bit of an oddity but then other men used the same expression and I realised it was a local term of endearment. I was quite used to women and London bus conductresses in particular using the term 'Duck' in addressing people regardless of sex, but never by one man to another. At first I couldn't believe my ears but after a while I found it charming, refreshing and disarming as against the usual male greeting to a male stranger, 'Mate', which has connotations of aggression and condescension.

I wonder how many Uxonians as well as people from the surrounding villages could name the tunes played by the bells of St. Mary's Parish Church? According to W.G. Torrance in 'Following Francis Redfern', the bells play the following airs, "Believe me if all those endearing young charms", "The Minstrel Boy", "Bluebells of Scotland" and "The Last Rose of Summer" to name a few of the more well-known tunes. It's sad to think that we no longer have all the time to savour these daily short renderings. I don't think many people hear the tunes, life has become so busy and frantic.

On the road out of Uttoxeter two fatal accidents occurred near the junction with Oldfields Road.

On Sunday, 24 March 1996 a 16 year old male cyclist was knocked down and killed by a goods vehicle.

On Monday, 12 May 1997 a 20 year old male pedestrian died after being struck by a goods vehicle.

OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES

Several pages on in this book Tom Goode of Rocester tells a more interesting first-hand tale of the road including Market Place, Carter Street, the crossing of the Hockley Brook and the level crossing, so meanwhile I'll take us further on to Blounts Green.

A DIVERSION TO ABBOTS BROMLEY

About a mile out of Uttoxeter just beyond the Plough Inn is the junction of the Stafford and Lichfield roads at Blounts Green. Blounts Green takes its name from the Blount (pronounced Blunt) family who lived here at Blounts Hall in the 1500's. Blounts Hall Farm now stands on the site of the Hall.

Redfern in his 'History of Uttoxeter' (1865) states that Parliamentary soldiers were stationed here at one stage during the Civil War. Redfern was said to have had a cannon ball - an artefact of the war - which had been found nearby.

The site of a moat of uncertain antiquity is situated in a field behind Blounts Hall Farm. The old pinfold is still visible by the junction of the two roads. It is marked by twelve stone posts forming a rectangle. About sixty or seventy years ago stray animals were kept here until their owners claimed them, after paying a fee.

Miss Beck of Uttoxeter told me that this stretch of the Abbots Bromley/Lichfield Road is called Kynnersley's Bank after the Kynnersleys of Loxley Hall who also owned nearby Highfields Hall as well as most of the land hereabouts.

We'll make a diversion here and go to Abbots Bromley, six miles away.

During the 18th Century coaching era before the railways, Abbots Bromley was an important stopping-off point on the road from London via Birmingham and Lichfield and on through Uttoxeter - which itself was a staging post to the Potteries and Newcastle. Abbots Bromley has an internationally renowned girls' boarding and day school, St. Mary's and St. Anne's, but even more renowned is the four hundred year old Abbots Bromley Horn Dance, unique in the world of English folklore.

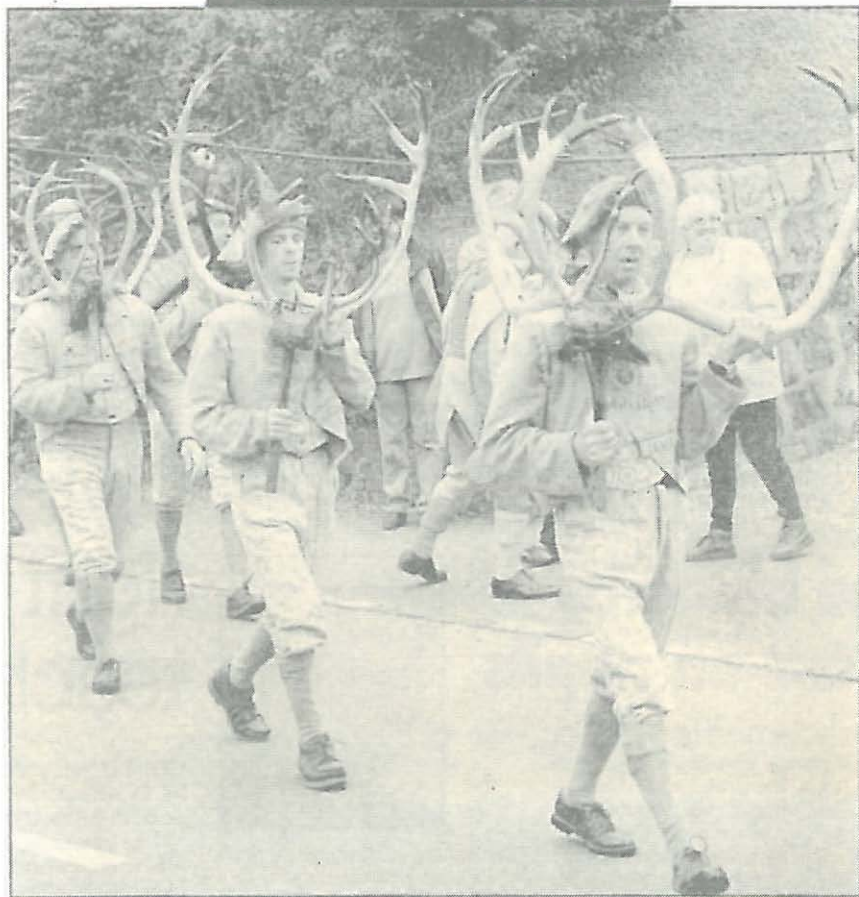
The dance takes place every year on the first Monday after September 4, when the market square is filled with hundreds of spectators from all over Britain and the world who come to witness this piece of Staffordshire folklore. Charity stalls and market stalls cluster round the old Butter Cross in an attempt to benefit from the large influx of visitors. The dancers are all played by men dressed in green costumes. The characters are Maid Marion, a jester, a man riding a hobby-horse, an accordinianist and six men carrying reindeer horns said to be 1,000 years old.

There are many threads of local history connecting this part of Staffordshire with the legendary Robin Hood and the fact that one of the dancers is called Maid Marion gives some strength to that belief.

Just three miles away the A518 passes through Loxley. The legendary outlaw was born at a place called Loxley and most local people believe it was the Staffordshire Loxley where Robin Hood was born. The whole area around Abbots Bromley and Uttoxeter was once part of the Needwood Forest which stretched across the Midlands to the Great Sherwood Forest, haunt of Robin Hood and his merry men.

The Abbots Bromley Horn Dance starts from St. Nicholas' Church where the horns are stored. From there the dancers set off on a twelve hour performance doing a circuit of farms, pubs and hamlets with a stop-off

HORN DANCERS



● The famous horn dancers of Abbots Bromley, near Uttoxeter, pictured during last September's festivities. Photo: TED BLACK

THE famous horn dancers of Abbots Bromley, who are performing in costumes made from old curtains 50 years ago, have launched an appeal to replace them. The group – who perform possibly the oldest known dance in the country – needs to raise thousands of pounds to make authentic apparel for the six horn bearers, the hobby horse, jester, Maid Marion, accordianist, triangle player and the bow and arrow bearer.

Les Kendrick, who for 20 years has played Maid Marion, said: "We are putting patches on patches. The clothes are very tatty." Appeal committee secretary Sheila Wroughton said that the costumes were made from curtains from the vicarage when Lady Bagot came into the area. She added: "It was in the days of austerity after the war and her dressmaker in London made up the costumes."

Thousands of people descend on Abbots Bromley every September to see the day long dance in the village and at Lady Bagot's home at nearby Blithfield Hall. The group is keen to get new costumes for this year's performance and a planned dance festival in Germany in the same month.

at Blithfield (pronounced Blidthfield) Hall for lunch.

Blithfield Hall is the ancient seat of the Bagot family and here the dancers perform the dance for Lady Bagot and her guests who join in the dance. The Bagots have supported the tradition for many years and have provided new costumes for the dancers when needed. Lady Bagot has personally welcomed the dancers to Blithfield Hall for the past fifty years.

The English Folk and Dance Society's interest in the Horn Dance led to an appearance by the dancers at the Royal Albert Hall in London.

After lunch at Blithfield Hall the dancers continue their tour and arrive back in the early evening at Abbots Bromley. A large crowd usually awaits them with camcorders and cameras recording the ancient dance to be taken all over the world.

In 1995 a video of the dance was available in shops and by mail order.

At the 1996 event a Japanese television company beamed the dance by satellite to Japan.

Abbots Bromley played host to a royal visitor in 1576. Mary Queen of Scots is said to have spent a night at Hall Hill, a farmhouse near the centre of the village while on her way from Chartley to her place of execution at Fotheringhay.

A tapestry said to have been removed to Blithfield Hall by the Earl of Essex from his home, Chartley Hall, is believed to have been taken to Hall Hill to make it more fitting for the stay of the royal prisoner. Ironically, the Earl of Essex by removing the tapestry from Chartley hoped to convince Queen Elizabeth that Chartley was unsuitable for Mary Queen of Scots.

Hall Hill, Abbots Bromley



Mary Queen of Scots is believed to have stayed here on her journey from Chartley Hall to her place of trial for treason at Fotheringhay in Northamptonshire. She was executed there by beheading on Wednesday, 8 February 1587.

Richard Bagot of Blithfield Hall used the same tapestry to make Mary's temporary prison more fitting for a queen. A pane of glass taken from Hall Hill is now preserved in the William Salt Library, Stafford.

Tradition had it that Mary Queen of Scots etched these words on the glass, 'Maria Regina Scotiae quondam transibat istam villam 21^o Septembris 1586 usque Burton.' - Mary Queen of Scots while passing through this village 21 September 1586 on her way to Burton.

We have a lot of information about the tragic queen because her Chaplain Bourgoing kept a diary which was later published in book form in France by Chantelauze. According to Bourgoing the Scottish Queen passed this way on her way to her execution at Fotheringhay. The diary tells us she passed the night at various places - Burton, Ashby Castle, the Angel Hotel at Leicester, the home of Roger Smith, a gentleman at Hestymshire, Rutland. On the fifth day, a Sunday, Mary arrived at the gloomy castle of Fotheringhay where on catching sight of that gloomy place she exclaimed the heart-breaking words, 'Perio - je suis perdue - I am doomed - I am lost.'

As we return to the Stafford - Uttoxeter road from Abbots Bromley we pass on the left the junction with the Rugeley road. The road crosses over the large Blithfield Reservoir on a long causeway. In summer swarms of swallows can be seen sweeping low over the causeway in their search for insects which collect above the waters of the reservoir. The reservoir is one of the first Bird Sanctuaries in the West Midlands and is also a nature reserve attracting a multitude of wild life.

DEEP in the spectacular Staffordshire countryside lies a monument to the skills of 20th century engineering which meets some of the most basic every day needs of thousands of people and yet is a nature reserve of international importance.

Blithfield Reservoir is so much part of the landscape that it is easy to forget that only half a century ago it was a broad, flat valley crossed only by the modest River Blythe.

Last month, ornithologist Bill Oddie marked a new development at the reservoir by officially opening South Staffordshire Waterworks Company's new environmental education centre on the shores of the lake. Already, dozens of children from the Black Country have visited the centre to learn more about their environment, particularly water.

If the authorities announced today that it was proposed to flood nearly 800 acres of green Staffordshire, it is not difficult to imagine the outcry that would ensue. The Newsletter certainly would not be short of headlines.

But back in the 1930s and '40s this is precisely what the private water company proposed to do and promoted an Act of Parliament to realise its ambitions. The firm had already been supplying water to 500,000 homes in Staffordshire for more than a century using all the technology at its disposal, but this was by far its most ambitious undertaking.

The task was perhaps made simpler by the fact that only two properties would sink beneath the water - a mill and a lodge - and the principal landowner, Lord Bagot, was willing to sell. The 2,810ft-long dam was constructed to hold 4,000 gallons of water at a maximum depth of 47 feet stretching more than two miles up the Blithe valley. It was officially opened by the Queen Mother in 1953.

At the northern end the reservoir splits into two arms, one following the original course of the Blithe and the other a small tributary, the Tad Brook. Between these two is an area of woodland which until recently contained some Victorian farm buildings used as a wood yard. These have now been converted into the education centre, providing classrooms for the children who visit.

Although the reservoir was constructed for purely functional reasons, it very quickly became an important habitat for water birds and the whole lake is now designated a site of special scientific interest. Birdwatchers quickly began to flock to the water as well, though as Bill Oddie explained in his inimitably humorous way, they were not exactly welcome. Water bailiffs were forever chasing them off.

South Staffordshire Waterworks director Simon Kenyon-Slaney admitted as much. "Water companies used not to encourage public access to their water gathering and storage grounds and we were no different from anybody else in that.

"Now there has been a change in attitude and we are going along with that. We realise that we have here one of the finest bird sanctuaries in the Midlands. It wasn't created with that object in mind but, but thanks to the birds, that is what has happened."

From an early stage, the water company has allowed a number of recreational uses. Bird life is looked after by the West Midlands Bird Club. For more than 20 years, the Mercian Yacht Club has sailed its boats in the southern half of the lake, below the causeway which carries the Rugeley-Utttoxeter road across it. The northern half is reserved for the birds.

Anglers and sub-aqua divers are among the other recreational users and the company runs a fishery.

Common sense and a healthy spirit of co-operation ensure that potential conflicts between these different uses are overcome and, of course, everyone has to remember that the reservoir must be kept as a pure public water supply.

As an educational day out for school children, Blithfield and the new education centre are hard to beat. For only £3 per head, the company provides

transport from school to the centre, an information pack, expert knowledge of the wildlife and lots of fun.

The children arrive at the entrance in the glorious setting of the woodland off the Newton-Abbots Bromley road above the northern shore. The education centre lies on the edge of a bluebell-carpeted wood of oak, hazel, holly and silver birch through which a gently sloping path suitable for wheelchairs winds through wood anemones, sanicle and other treasures to the water's edge.

Among the birds for which Blithfield is famous is the wigeon, a winter visitor which breeds in Scandinavia and Russia but which turns up in large numbers. Smew, scaup, cormorants, herons and even ospreys also visit.

The directors of the water company receive regular reports of what birds are on the reservoir at their board meetings.

The north-eastern arm of the lake, where the Tad Brook flows in, has a scrape for wading birds to feed in during the autumn when the water level is low.

A pond close to the centre, fed with rainwater from the roof, provides an opportunity for the youngsters to dabble their nets and collect smaller water creatures, like water boatmen.

Education co-ordinator Steve Blower said: "We see this as an extension of the service we offer. The policy used to be to keep people out of reservoirs. Now we want to encourage people to visit, but in a controlled way.

Children are the customers and employers of tomorrow and if we can teach them to respect their environment, we all benefit."

BAGOT'S PARK

For centuries Bagot's Park has been renowned for its stately oaks, its Bagot goats and its natural beauty.

The Walking Stick Oak stands more than seventy feet tall despite the fact that it has been dead for years. There were other magnificent oak trees in Bagot's Park but alas they are now gone, sold in the 1930's for a pittance.

The most famous of the oaks was the huge Beggar's Oak with its immense girth and its long extending branches supported by wooden props. Legend has it that one day Lord Bagot ignored the pleas of a beggar as he passed the oak where the beggar was sheltering. The beggar cursed the Bagots and prayed that when the oak collapsed the Bagot family would die out. Despite the wooden props supporting its extensive branches Beggar's Oak collapsed. Within months the Bagot estate was sold off.

There is also a prediction connected with the Bagots and the famous Bagot goats. Legend has it that the goats were presented to Sir John Bagot by King Richard II in appreciation for the excellent hunting he had enjoyed at Bagot's Park, which was once part of the Needwood Forest. The crest of the Bagot family has a prominent goat's head on it. It was said that if the goats died out so too could the Bagot family. It sounds very similar to the legend surrounding the Chartley Cattle and the de Ferrers.

For over one hundred years the Jackson family were goat-keepers of the famous Bagot goats. They lived at Goat Lodge, Bagot's Park. When Miss Mary Jackson, the last of the Jacksons, died in the 1950's local people predicted the end of the Bagot family.

GUARDIAN OF A LEGEND DIES

Third generation of Bagot's Park goat-keepers

For the first time for more than 100 years the goats of the Bagot family are without a keeper.

For well over half a century Miss Mary Jackson, who lived in the picturesque Goats Lodge in Bagot's Park, Abbots Bromley, was more than the keeper of the herd of black-faced goats which roamed the woods; she was the guardian of a legend... that if the goats die out the Bagot family, who were established in this country in

the 11th century, would also come to an end.

Miss Jackson, who died last week did not believe the legend, although, with amazing devotion, she continued to tend the 40-strong herd of goats in all sorts of weather.

"I remember being told about the legend when I was a little girl, but I hold nothing by it. The goats have always been here and they always will be," she once said.

The responsibility for looking after the goats in Bagot's Park had rested with the Jackson family for more than a century. Miss Jackson's grandfather and father established the tradition and she had carried it on since the death of her father.

THE ONLY ONE

She was the only person the goats would allow to walk among them. At the least suspicious sound or sight they would scatter into the vast woodland before anyone could get within 50 yards of them.

"They are shy, nervous creatures, but they are very loyal. I went into hospital sometime ago and when I came out I thought the goats would have forgotten me, but they hadn't and I was able to walk among them just as I have always done," Miss Jackson once explained.

FROM A KING

The goats themselves have their own historic background.

The original herd was presented to the Bagot family by King Richard 2nd in the 14th century after a particularly enjoyable hunting session in the Needwood Forest, of which Bagot's Park was once a part.

Since then the goats have figured prominently in the Bagot family traditions. They are incorporated in the family coat of arms and Goats Lodge—built by the second Lord Bagot for his woodman well over a century ago—has a row of carved goat heads door.

To-day the goats continue to roam the dense undergrowth which steals up to the front door of the lodge—just as they have roamed Bagot's Park unmolested through more than 500 years of troublesome English history.

But there is no keeper at Goats Lodge now. Miss Jackson was the last of a family with a proud, though unusual record.



Miss Mary Jackson.

courtesy of Mrs. Nola Whittaker of Loxley.

In the 1970's Lady Nancy Bagot took the last of the Bagot goats to the Rare Breeds Survival Trust.

In 1963 Phil Drabble the naturalist and his wife Jesse bought Goat Lodge and ninety acres of the adjacent Holly Covert, the last of the woodland of Bagot's Wood. Goat Lodge with its goats' heads over the entrance has been modernised and sensitively extended. Holly Covert has been nurtured as a haven for wild life. Phil Drabble, whose name is synonymous with wild life, has written numerous books on nature and hosted television programmes, perhaps the most famous being One Man and His Dog.

During the Second World War the government required local county councils and landowners to reclaim suitable land for arable purposes. 335 acres of Bagot's Park were covered in bracken, poor turf and large ant hills. The land was ploughed, limestone applied and then made ready for seeding. The work was supervised by Staffordshire War Agricultural Executive Committee and one of many similar projects undertaken throughout Staffordshire and the whole of the nation as part of the War Effort.

The remaining 236 acres of Bagot's Park were used as a bombing range by the RAF. The small practice bombs penetrated to a depth of two to three feet and made holes about 12" in diameter. This land, too, was eventually ploughed, cultivated and seeded and by June 1946 the reclaimed bombing range was heavily stocked with cattle and sheep.

Bagot's Park in the middle ages had a thriving charcoal industry and as a result became a centre for glass-making and probably attracting glass craftsmen from northern Europe, the areas now known as Belgium, Holland and Northern France. An edict of 1615 forbade the use of timber for firing furnaces because the nation's forests were being depleted. The edict led to the end of the cottage or local glass industry and to the concentration of the industry in areas where coal could be found.

SALE OF TIMBER ON BLITHFIELD ESTATE

From an old newspaper cutting courtesy of Mrs. Nola Whittaker

Approximately £26,240 was realised at the sale of timber of the Blithfield Estate of Lord Bagot. The highest figure was £10,600 for the property known as Bagot's Wood, one of the famous covers in Meynell Hunt country, purchased by Mr. W.R. Bagshaw of Uttoxeter.

Bagot's Walking Stick, a giant oak, more than 70 ft. in height was withdrawn from the sale.

On September 22 1933 7,000 acres of farm land on the Bagot Estate will come onto the market.



The arms of Lord Bagot, showing the famous Blithfield goats

In 1995 the Bagot goat was re-introduced to the area by Nick Phillips, a local farmer, from Abbots Bromley. He hopes one day to release the goats into Bagot's Wood. The Bagot goats it seems were known to jump fences as high as 4'6" and so Mr. Phillips has the area where he keeps the goats surrounded by high fences to protect the crops of neighbouring farmers.

THE GREEN GODDESSES

A few miles away down country lanes lies the village of Marchington with its wooded hills and steep inclines strangely out of place with the surrounding Staffordshire countryside. On an industrial estate built on former Ministry of Defence land is the home of the Green Goddesses - 1,077 of them, built in the 1950's as fire tenders or self-propelled pumps for the Auxiliary Fire Service.

In 1991 TNT Express, normally associated with delivering parcels and goods, won a ten year contract from the Government to store and maintain over 1,000 Green Goddesses, 140 Land Rovers and Austin Gypsies plus miles of extending ladders and lengths of hoses, 2,000 water pumps, 1,000 batteries, 600 spare wheels and the clothing requirements of 6,000 firemen. TNT Express keeps the vehicles and equipment in tip-top condition ready for an emergency anywhere in the country. The Green Goddesses are road-tested daily, in rotation, much to the delight of those motorists lucky enough to sight them on the roads.

Although TNT Express are responsible for the contract at Marchington there is a Home Office presence on the site.

In November 1977 during the Fire Brigade Strike the Green Goddesses manned by hastily trained soldiers were brought into service to ensure public safety.

The base was officially opened in 1991 by Lord Ferrers, Minister of State, who is descended from the Ferrers family of Chartley and Loxley.

Nearer Uttoxeter is Willslock, scene of a tragedy over forty years ago. On Friday, 25 February 1955 an insurance agent from Stockport was found dying from stab wounds just off the Abbots Bromley - Uttoxeter Road. Twenty eight year old Donald Haywood Lainton was found just before 3 p.m. in a doubled-up position in the back of his fawn Ford Prefect car on a farm track at Willslock. He had been stabbed ten times in the chest, neck and face. He died in Stafford Hospital at 4 a.m. the following morning without regaining consciousness. He left a wife Kathleen and two year old son Andrew. Frederick Arthur Cross, a 33 year old concrete moulder who had been living in a Nissen hut at the RAF Station at Hixon was arrested for the crime. Cross had met Donald Lainton at the Coach & Horses public house in Great Haywood and they had been seen leaving together. Cross had been known by the landlady. He was later sentenced to death for the brutal murder of Donald Lainton.

OUR JOURNEY CONTINUE S

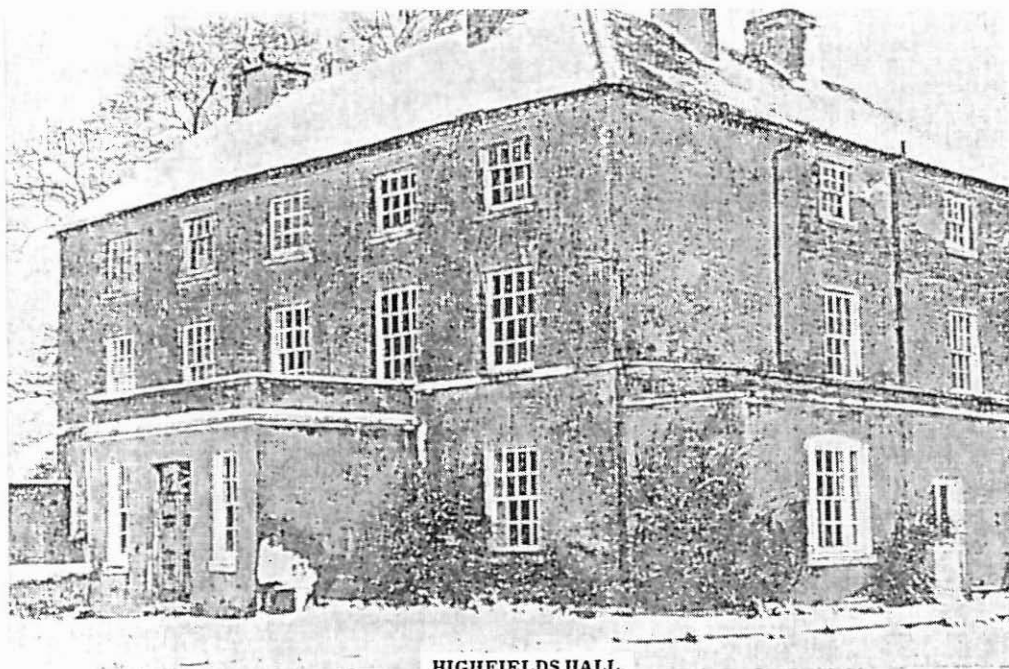
We now retrace our steps to the Stafford - Uttoxeter road where we continue our journey from the old pinfold by Blounts Hall Farm.

The road to Stafford now starts to rise quite steeply. If you look back you can see how Uttoxeter is surrounded by hills with the spire of St. Mary's Church towering above the surrounding market town. These hills often protect Uttoxeter from the worst of the elements. Many a time in winter I have returned along a fog-bound A518 to find Uttoxeter basking in bright sunshine.

We soon arrive at the entrance to Highfields Nursing Home on the left-hand side of the road. At one time it was called Highfields Hall and was part of the 3,000 acre Loxley Estate owned by the Kynnersleys of Loxley Hall. After Loxley Estate was sold off in 1916 Mrs. Kynnersley lived at Highfields Hall.

Captain and Mrs. Ridout later lived at Highfields Hall. Captain Ridout died a horrendous death and that tragedy is told in Tom Goode's story which follows. Mrs. Ridout, a very brave woman, continued to live at Highfields until she died.

Mrs. Elizabeth Ridout died aged 78 and the house was looked after by her sister Mrs. Frances Bates, a retired headmistress. Highfields Hall was put on the market and sold amidst speculation as to its future. It was converted into a Nursing Home and continues in that useful role to this day.



HIGHFIELDS HALL.

We'll stop here to tell Tom Goode's story before continuing to Loxley.

TOM GOODE'S STORY

Pedalling along the road from Uttoxeter to Stafford,
how brilliant the stars were on a cloudless night,
some Uttoxeter memories, pigs on the loose on
Uttoxeter High Street, tragedy at Highfields Hall,
Robin Hood and Loxley,
the Sneyd-Kynnersley wedding and the hunting horn,
spectacular crash with Green Bus at the notorious
bend near Chartley Castle, Weston Hall, Weston Bank
and UFO's, pushing a Green Bus up Weston Bank,
stopped by police with 100 people on a Green Bus,
memories of a vanished world.

My name is Tom Goode. I was born in London where my father was a tram driver for the L.U.T. (London United Tramways). As a soldier I met my wife at the Plaza Ballroom in Derby, and eventually we were married in March of 1943 at Mayfield. When the War ended I returned to live in the Dove Valley.

I have a lot of memories of the road from Uttoxeter to Stafford as it was all those long years ago. For a main road it was very quiet. Cows crossed it at several places. I think they still do at Lower Loxley? They certainly did the last time I drove that way to Stafford in 1990. Cattle were often driven along it for some distance.

For a number of reasons I travelled along it frequently in the 1946 - 1953 period - for long periods at least once a week. I cycled as well as travelled by Green Bus.

My pedalling was often at night. If you met one car between Weston and Uttoxeter it was an event! Even between Stafford and Weston there were very few. Stafford ended at the hospital, long before you got to the R.A.F. From the end of town it was darkness all the way to Uttoxeter.

I think even old folk forget at times how dark the countryside was then on moonless nights and how grateful we were when the moon was full. How brilliant the stars were on a cloudless night! Even from Weston Bank few, if any, lights were visible. Trees screened any from the Stafford direction, though on cloudy nights when the clouds were low you could see a glow. Most rural properties were dependant on oil or Tilley lamps. No villages then had street lamps. The majority had no electricity or gas. There was no T.V. and folk went to bed quite early on working days. Remember, hours were pretty long. Most worked on Saturday, though with the afternoon off, and Sunday was a very precious day of rest and recreation for most people. Indeed, generally life was much the same as pre-war, including our beliefs and expectations.

This road is still only a single carriageway with few safe places to overtake. Thinking back fifty years it is sometimes hard to remember just how narrow and winding the road was before any of the subsequent improvements. Weston Bank was very, very steep and narrow. Deep rocky sides hemmed it in as you approached the top. The cross-roads at Weston where the A518 crossed the A51 were notoriously bad. The set-up is completely different today, though you can get some idea of how bad it was when you realise the school house was right by the cross-roads - which went straight across. You couldn't see over the rise of the railway bridge in the Rugeley direction and the road had a sharp bend in it! I had a friend who lived in the school house - (he wasn't a teacher, it was rented) who was frequently called on to help with accidents at all hours. The road was full of bends, but from Chartley to Weston it was tortuously winding. So far as I recall The Plough at Amerton was the only pub by the roadside in the fourteen miles between Uttoxeter and Stafford.

Incidentally, during this period I did a lot of cycling before I bought my first car in 1953.

I cycled to Cotes Heath almost every weekday from Uttoxeter for a year. (1947 - 1948). So long as I was passing Uttoxeter church before 7 a.m. I was in good time. I went via Milwich, Stone, Yarnfield and Swynnerton Park. If for some reason I had to take the bus, then the earliest Green Bus connected at Stafford with one to Eccleshall which connected with another for Newcastle via Millmeece to Cotes Heath.

For a further year (1951 - 1952) I travelled to Rugeley by cycle four evenings a week - returning at midnight - plus Saturday and Sunday. Buses did run to Rugeley but not at the times I needed. Somehow I doubt if young men today would do as we had to do.

In 1946 Uttoxeter was very much a small compact country town - (do you remember Emery's the blacksmith in Silver Street, Golden Ball Yard, the houses in Spiceal Street or the Cottagers' Church?) with open fields close at hand, though the first six semi-detached post-war houses were soon to be built on the right hand side of a new road starting at the Heath - opposite the laundry and past the old Workhouse. Grange Road - Redfern Road was completed by 1949. Most people knew each other and the social structure was very obvious. The Leighton Iron Works, (Bamfords) The Dairy, Elkes Biscuits and the Corset Factory at the Wharf were the main employers, but the Market was the heart of the town. The railway played its part. In those days most animals would be driven through the town to and from the station on Wednesdays, or to the local butchers. Young lads could always make a bob or two "cow thumping", as they called it. There were frequent excitements when animals broke loose in the town centre! One hilarious occasion I witnessed was when a score or so of pigs destined for Allsops the butcher escaped up the High Street and then turned through the narrow entry - as it was then - into Smithfield Road before setting off at full speed for the country, pursued by their youthful custodians!

But I mustn't gossip about Uttoxeter or I'll never get on to the road to Stafford!

From the centre of Uttoxeter you set off for Stafford down Carter Street. On the right hand corner was Elkes' cake shop with a tea room above, while on the left was a gentlemen's tailor, followed by the Co-op (one of two in the town). The Post Office, which had the Telephone Exchange upstairs, the Garage (which then sold petrol and was called 'Atkeys') and the White Hart were much as they are today. The St. John Ambulance H.Q. and Wilfred House had not been built. The Parish Church had a room on the site of the former. I ran a Church Youth Club in it. Further along beyond the White Hart was Mottrams the ironmongers. He was a town 'character'! His shop always had what you asked for, but it might take an hour or more to find! The Quakers' Meeting House, Morin's shop on the corner of Stone Road, the pub ("The George and Dragon" - landlord Holmes), the Almshouses, Balance Street with another pub on the corner (usually called "Top of the Hockley", though I believe the correct name was "The Shrewsbury and Talbot" - landlord Henshaw) led down into the Hockley. Here another well-known local personality, Mr. A.G.K. Davis, lived in the houses on the right past Oldfields Road. He was a long time Church Warden and what was known in those days as a 'school correspondent'. Children of those days would have remembered him like Dr. Duck, and Mr. Mansfield the 'attendance man'!

A hundred yards further was the hump of the bridge over the Hockley Brook followed by the level crossing. Bamford's agricultural machinery factory stretched all along the brookside to the left, while to the right a fenced-off footpath through a swing gate went along between the brook and the railway to the old (already disused) open-air swimming pool at the bottom of the recreation ground.

There was, of course, no Picknalls School, no Leisure Centre, only Oldfields Hall grounds. Oldfields Hall was named after the family who built it. It was next in the possession of the Bladons, and by 1946, the Bamfords.

The level crossing was operated from the crossing signal box and with the frequency of trains in those days it caused endless delays to traffic. There was a pedestrian wicket gate on the left-hand, pathway, side of the road and I can still hear the "clunk" of the gate as it was locked shut just as you hoped to get through!

Once over the crossing it was past the cemetery and up the hill to Blounts Green. To the left was one of the pre-war housing expansions of Uttoxeter, while to the right the only house on the slope was Mr. Stubbs'. On the left, just before the top of Westlands Road, stood a detached house where "Rocking Johnny" Austin, then a small boy, lived with his aunt. Opposite was a footpath which went through to 'The Arches' - a favourite with children then. Turning round there were good views over the town, of the church and over into Derbyshire at Eaton Woods. A few more houses, mainly on the left, and then "The Plough" with cottages opposite. In fields nearby were traces of the moat etc. of the manor house built by the Blount family. At the old Town Pound, set in the middle of the highway, the road to Abbots Bromley and Rugeley bore off to the left.

Now you were almost out into the open countryside. A furlong farther were two large houses, both once part of the Loxley estate. First came the entrance drive to "Highfields Hall" on the left, then that of the "Dearndales" on the right. I had some acquaintance with Captain and Mrs. Ridout who lived at Highfields Hall. The Captain and I were both Territorials.

He still liked to drive a horse and trap. I can see him now trotting down the Hockley! Though he was one of the town's leading Conservatives, he advised me to transfer my account from Lloyds Bank in Uttoxeter to the Co-operative Bank at Stafford. This was the best piece of financial advice I have ever been given. Tragically he found he had terminal cancer and committed suicide by running on to his own sword which he had fixed to the kitchen table.

It was a terrible shock to Mrs. Ridout but she was a brave woman and continued to live at Highfields. She became well known as a dog breeder, but as the years passed the building and gardens, of which the Captain had been so proud, fell into a poor state of repair. Her sister, Mrs. Bates, a war-widow and a very well-loved teacher/headmistress, came to live with her when they were both elderly. Eventually the property has become a retirement nursing home.

Past Leasowes Farm - (leasowes meaning meadows and pronounced 'leesyous') - down and up a dip and we come to the second milestone from Uttoxeter at Loxley.

To the left a lane led off to Loxley Green and to the right one went steeply down to Bramshall crossing. When this crossing was first made into an automatic barrier the sign said, "Wait while the lights are flashing". An acquaintance of mine, who is still hale and hearty, was found sitting patiently on his tractor one Monday morning with the crossing clear and the barrier open. On being asked by a passing friend why he was waiting he pointed to the notice! British Rail was informed and for some years you could see where "while" had been repainted to "when". (Dialect speakers will get the point!)

In the copse at the top of this lane was where the body of that poor murdered Susan Maxwell was found a few years ago.

One legend has it that Robin Hood was born at Loxley and was said to have married Maid Marian at Tutbury. Of course it is generally agreed that Robin Hood ('Robin á hood', or the 'Green Man') is eponymous but when the Sneyd-Kynnersley family lived at Loxley Hall they had a hunting horn with the initials R H carved on it, reputed to be of ancient origin. However, the family had long since ceased to reside there and after many changes the house was to become a residential school for the Staffordshire Education Committee.

The family 'borrowed' back a few main downstairs rooms at the front of the mansion for the wedding reception of one of their daughters when she married the Rev. Michael Clark, Vicar of Uttoxeter, in the summer of 1948. Beforehand these rooms were re-curtained and re-furnished with some of their original contents. I, and others, personally helped Mrs. Sneyd-Kynnersley with these preparations. I was the Parish Clerk at Uttoxeter at the time so knew the Vicar well.

My wife and I were invited to the ceremony at Uttoxeter and the reception at Loxley Hall. Following our viewing of the wedding gifts - in the old library - and the meal, the speeches, and so forth, I ended up helping the bride's uncle with the champagne. We made sure only the family and important guests drank the expensive stuff! This was only fair since there were large numbers present and food and drink was available till the end of the proceedings quite late in the day. In the course of these festivities many family treasures were on display, including the hunting horn. What became of it subsequently I have no idea. I'm afraid that most of those present then are dead now.

Wednesday, December 24, 1947

Messrs W S Bagshaws and Sons conducted a sale of a portion of the antiques and modern furnishings of Loxley Hall on Monday.

Several items were included, the most notable being an early 18th century grandfather clock by Daniel Quail, one of the most celebrated craftsmen of the period; this realised 420 guineas.

Close by Bramshall crossing was the junction for the Stafford Branch which was still in use by the R.A.F. back in the forties and early fifties before their operations were closed at Hixon and reduced at Stafford. This line therefore still existed under Tunnel Bank, just past the lane for Woodcock Heath. There was a house, but no petrol station at the top of the hill before the road dropped down to Burndhurst Mill. Then it was round the corner, along past the Gratwich turn and up to a sharp right/left 'S' bend to the farm of Mr. and Mrs. Earp on the right of the road at Grindley - Newbuildings Farm. I have played opposite Mrs. Gwen Earp in productions of the old Uttoxeter Dramatic Society at the Town Hall fifty years ago. She claimed to be related by marriage to the famous U.S. marshal.

A mile or so further towards Stafford on the same side of the road was 'The General's Farmhouse'. We were friendly with the Christy family who lived there before the road was levelled and straightened out. They moved to Wellesbourne in the mid fifties.

Seven miles from Uttoxeter the road wound down through a succession of curves past Chartley Castle to the flatness of the Trent Valley. The Castle and the Hall always fascinated me because of their history. I was very lucky to have spent a day there fifty years ago with Mr. W.G. Torrance, including a stroll across the railway to Chartley Moss.

This section of the road was the scene of frequent accidents. I was involved in one with a Green Bus.

I had an acquaintance from Stramshall called Rhodes - I forget his Christian name - who had a motor cycle combination. He used to take me to Stafford occasionally on Saturdays in the early fifties. We were going towards Stafford down the narrow winding hill with Chartley Castle on the right.

As we went round the last bend at a good pace there was suddenly in front of us a Green Bus drawn up alongside another Green Bus en route to Uttoxeter with the drivers having a chat! Rhodes did his best, but he couldn't stop in time. I sat helplessly cocooned in the sidecar. We hit the back of the bus. The sidecar snapped off and with me in it sailed past the windows of the bus with all the startled faces looking down at me. It came to rest swinging in the roadside hedge. I was trapped inside but quite unharmed.

Rhodes was catapulted into the bus and quite comically ended up sitting next to a plump lady from Hixon Lane, Mrs. Charlesworth I think her name was, on the sideways-facing seats at the back of the bus! The only person who was slightly hurt - bruised by a flying Rhodes - was the conductor on his semi-open platform.

We left the wrecked bits of bike by the roadside for later collection and went back to Uttoxeter on the other bus.

I remember the road was very narrow between high hedges through Weston and the two bridges - canal and river - were even narrower. Weston Hall had a neglected appearance. It was further from the road before all the alterations and it was not easily seen from the road except as you came over the Trent bridge. My only contact with it was when it was originally divided into flats after its period of empty neglect. I went there to recover a debt in the early seventies.

Weston Bank, ten miles from Uttoxeter, was the most dramatic feature of this road. It started and ended with a nasty bend. It was very narrow in places between high rocky walls and it was steeper than it is today. Trees overhung much of the hill, but before you reached the very top the road eased slightly and there was a gate into an open field on the left. This field was backed in the Stafford direction by a coppice, but the view over the Trent Valley to the north and east was superb. I often went into this field to see the view, especially of Chartley Castle when the light was right in the late afternoon.

There was one curious incident. I was being given a lift by car to Stafford by a colleague (Jim Leyton - he became the Youth Officer for the old Westmorland County Council) one afternoon at about a quarter-to-five. He organised a Youth Club at Stafford Gaol in the young offenders' wing and I sometimes helped him. I can't be sure of the date exactly, but I guess it would be in the summer of 1950. As we climbed the Bank we saw a number of vehicles parked alongside this field with a view. The occupants, some in the cars, others in the field, were all staring and pointing up into the sky over the valley. They seemed excited so we stopped and went to see what it was all about.

Apparently they had seen some extraordinary aircraft flying in an unusual manner. They had appeared from the Stafford direction over the trees and then 'hovered and darted to and fro', in the words of our informant. Jim and I stayed for a few minutes hoping for the aircraft to reappear but we were unlucky. Since there were still a number of nearby airfields left from the wartime we assumed they were from one of these, especially since we had heard rumours that Boulton-Paul were supposed to be experimenting with some 'secret' plane or other! I think they used Ranton aerodrome? I understand that UFO enthusiasts later made much of these sightings but then, if you believe UFO's are from outer space and have crews of aliens, you'll believe anything!

The Green Buses had lots of problems with Weston Bank! Quite often, good weather or bad, they had difficulty getting to the top after leaving Weston. The trouble was that they were often laughable wrecks and so ancient as to be unbelievable, many with wooden seats! The workmens' buses were always full and should the bus driver miss his gears, or not get a good run at the hill, the bus would come to a stop on the slope. The few lady passengers would remain seated but the men had to get off and trudge to the top. On half a dozen occasions I helped push the bus to give it a start after it had stalled!

There could be problems approaching this hill from the Stafford side. Although not so steep, it was a long haul uphill for an overloaded bus and an even more dangerous descent to the river valley. The last workmens' bus of the day out of Stafford was always very crowded, though things eased a bit after Weston. Since there was no later bus to Uttoxeter no-one was willing to be left behind. I remember on one occasion it was so full that late-comers, including myself, could do no more than hang on to the back with only our toes lodged on the platform. Buses had conductors in those days but he was wedged inside somewhere and would have to collect the fares as people began to get off.

Anyway, the bus eventually groaned out of Stafford and slowly fought its way up the slopes of the Weston Road. It became too much for this antiquated museum piece! As the gradient steepened towards where the Staffordshire Agricultural Society show-ground now is it stopped and would go no farther! It was seized and boiling! Water was fetched by obliging passengers from a nearby cottage, now demolished, and around fifty people had to get off before the machine could be restarted. At the top of that particular steep slope it waited for us.

The driver was standing by the road-side and he explained that we should all have to get off again at the top of Weston Bank as he daren't attempt to drive downhill with such a load. He promised to wait for us at the bottom. However, no sooner were we all clinging to the bus again and slowly under way than a police car caught us up, stopped the bus, and made us all get out so that they could count us. It came to around a hundred! This incident made the local headlines. Under police supervision a great crowd of us set off for Weston on foot. Yes! The bus did wait for us there!

Finally down to Stafford - far more compact than today and far more of a community. There was a large R.A.F. presence to the right, but no showground, no school, no college, no roundabout and no new houses. Lots of men and some women travelled into Stafford from as far as Rocester, even Ashbourne, by bus to work at English Electric, B.R.C., Dormans and Lotus. Many got off in Littleworth while some carried on to Pitcher Bank where other bus connections could be made.

When you look back, it's amazing how many people were on the move early in the morning on those workmens buses and trains. Fares were cheap. But especially do you remember all those little steamy cafes at the terminals - Whieldon's Garage in Uttoxeter, the Pitcher Bank in Stafford as examples - where we workers were glad of hot mugs of tea on dark, cold, wet mornings in winter?

Like 'knockers up' and factory whistles, they are memories of the vanished world of fifty years ago!

story teller

Before continuing our journey a few words about the Green Bus Company whose buses were a familiar sight on the Stafford - Uttoxeter road before everyone had a car. Today Stevenson's buses provide a lifeline for students from Uttoxeter attending Stafford college or Staffordshire University at Beaconside, Stafford and those who need to go to Stafford or Uttoxeter and don't drive.

THE GREEN BUS COMPANY (WHIELDONS)

The green coloured buses of The Green Bus Company were a familiar sight on the roads to Stafford and Uttoxeter for many years. The company was founded in 1927 by Charles Whieldon whose family were farmers in the Uttoxeter area. His other claim to fame was he was one of the first four people in Uttoxeter to drive a car.

The Green Bus service began with a regular run between Uttoxeter and Rugeley. Within a few months this was extended to serve Cannock and Lichfield. A Uttoxeter - Stafford service was developed in 1938.

With the increase in car ownership the Green Bus Company found it difficult to make its routes profitable. In 1973 when the company sold out to Midland Red, a subsidiary of the National Bus Company, it had 32 buses, 43 full-time drivers, mechanics and office workers with two depots - one at Uttoxeter and one at Rugeley. The Green Bus Company had three groups of excursions and day tours and express services to Blackpool and North Wales. At the time the Green Bus Company was taken over Tony Whieldon, son of the founder, was managing director. The last run by the Green Bus Company on the Stafford - Uttoxeter route was on Saturday, 5 November 1973.

STEVENSONS BUSES

In June 1980 the yellow livery of Stevensons buses was first seen on the Uttoxeter - Stafford route. Stevensons buses are now a regular sight on the A518 diverting at Stowe by Chartley to take in Stone, Hixon and Pasturefields before rejoining the A518 at Weston. Stevensons is now part of the Midland Red Group. It is a pleasant surprise to see Stevensons yellow buses in the Manchester area though I don't suppose there are many Mancunians who know the origins of Stevensons.

MORRIS DANCING MARKS THE LAST GREEN BUS JOURNEY

'WILL BE SADLY MISSED'

The Green Bus Co., Ltd., provided its final services in Uttoxeter and district last week-end before being taken over by the National Bus Company.

The takeover marks the end of a Uttoxeter family business which has served the area since 1927 and has been held in great affection by generations of local travellers.

It was founded by the late Mr. Charles Whieldon, who was one of the first four people in the town to drive a car.

Uttoxeter Morris Dancers staged special commemoration dances to mark the final journey from Stafford to Uttoxeter at 6.30 p.m. on Saturday night.

They danced first near the bus stop at Pitcher Bank, Stafford, and then followed the bus in a duplicate decorated with Union Jacks and bunting.

There was more dancing at Weston, Ankerion and the Plough Inn before a final send-off at Uttoxeter.

When the bus finally arrived in the town; some two hours after the start of the journey, it was greeted by a crowd of well-wishers.

The driver of the bus was Mr. Ken Smith, the bus company manager.

The vehicle was pushed by the Morris Dancers from the kiosk in the Market-place to the offices in Bridge-street.

The final event was the singing of "Auld Lang Syne," as the Green Bus entered the yard for the last time.

Mr. Smith commented: "I feel sure that the Green Bus Company is going to be sadly missed."

R.I.P.

On Wednesday, 14 October 1989 an 80 year old man suffered a fatal injury when his car crashed near here. No other vehicle was involved.

Almost opposite the entrance to Highfields Nursing Home is the gateway to Dearndales. Once again I am indebted to Miss Beck who told me it was once the Dowager House - the house lived in by the widow of a local lord or landowner.

Continuing along the road to Stafford the road begins to descend and on our left-hand side we see Popinjay Farm quite close to the road.

Mrs. Gwen Earp-Haward came to live at Popinjay Farm as a child in 1909. Later on in this book she tells her own extraordinary story. Some people say that Popinjay Farm was once an inn. It was Doug Durose of Tean who first told me that a popinjay, apart from being a brightly coloured parrot, was in the middle ages the name for a target in the shape of a parrot used by archers to practise their skills with the long-bow. Robin Hood and his merry men would have been at home here.

R.I.P.

On Saturday, 21 May 1983 two cars collided at Poppinjay Hollow killing an 18 year old male driver.

The road to Stafford now descends steeply until we cross a small stream at the bottom of the valley when the road almost immediately rises just as steeply on the other side. Near the top of the hill on the left-hand side is a lay-by which was once part of the old road. Before the road was realigned you had to take a 90° right turn and then a sharp left to take you onto the Stafford road. The changes to the road in straightening it out have left a large piece of land between the lay-by and the main road. This has been allowed to return to its natural state with trees and bushes growing wild.

It was here in August 1995 that I encountered two ex-coal miners from the Hem Heath Colliery, Stoke on Trent. They had used their redundancy money to buy two horse-drawn caravans. Doug Shaw and Henry Docherty now spend the summer months going to horse fairs and events up and down the country. After years working down the mines their's is the ideal life-style; no stress, no quotas, lots of fresh air and plenty of time to reflect.

Turning left onto the very straight road to Loxley Green and Kingstone Loxley Bank Farm is clearly visible perched on a hill on the left of the road. The Whittaker family have farmed here and in the area for many generations. Loxley Bank Farm was once part of the extensive Loxley Estate owned by the Kynnersleys. Harold and Nola Whittaker now in retirement live nearby in sight of the farm they managed for many years.

A Life on the Open Road



Doug Shaw, Joe Shaw, Henry Docherty and Luke Collier parked up for the night at Loxley.

BOMBING AEROPLANE LANDS AT LOXLEY

7 September 1915

On Thursday night a huge Handley Page bombing aeroplane was compelled, owing to a very thick fog, to alight at Loxley in a field near Mr. Whittaker's farm. In alighting one of the wings of the machine was damaged but none of the occupants was injured.

From an old newspaper cutting courtesy Mrs. Nola Whittaker of Loxley.

HAROLD WHITTAKER'S STORY

Sneyd-Kynnersleys and Loxley Hall, Mr. Torrance,
Bramshall Home Guard, German bombers over Loxley,
Stray bombs in the Loxley area,
Susan Maxwell's murder, Robin Hood's Chapel,
Memorial Stone to Craven Kynnersley
accidentally shot in 1736,
Long Walk and the fortune teller,
old photographs of hay-making at Loxley

My name is Harold Whittaker. I live at Long Walk, Loxley. My grandparents, Robert and Catherine (nee Lawton) Whittaker came from Barthomley, Cheshire to farm at Wall Heath, then part of the Sneyd-Kynnersley Estate near Uttoxeter.

The Sneyd-Kynnersleys who lived at Loxley Hall owned most of the land in the Loxley and surrounding area. They were direct descendants of the de Ferrers family.

My grandparents later moved to Lower Loxley Farm beside the Uttoxeter - Stafford road. They had a family of six boys, Reginald, Robert, James, Ernest, Cyril and Arthur and two girls, Gladys and Kathleen.

Years later four of the sons were to lease farms on the estate.

My Uncle James was a soldier in the First World War - he told me that on his return the train from Stafford made a special stop at the back of Lower Loxley Farm and he was able to walk home across the fields. He later went to live in Australia.

My father, Robert, took over Loxley Bank Farm in 1918 and the following year he married Florence Witter Winnington from Booth, Blythe Bridge, Kingstone.

I was born in 1920. At 5 years old I walked 2½ miles to school at Kingstone with my sister Margaret and cousins. If it was raining we were taken by horse and float. I can remember the names of a few of my teachers - Mrs. Beech, Miss Rowe and Miss Reddington. At 12 I went to Uttoxeter Boys' Grammar School where Mr. Torrance, who was a local historian, struggled to teach me English.

In 1940 I joined Bramshall Home Guard and spent duty nights in the Village Hall at Bramshall. We had a look-out post on the tower of the Church. One windy night the hut blew off and caused a lot of damage to the roof. One Saturday night three small bombs were dropped by German bombers, two on our farm, one in a field known as Beany Leasow, one in the Stafford field - bordering the road and another on the opposite side in a field belonging to Poppinjay Farm. The next morning Albert Corbishley (one of our farmworkers) and I went down to the crater to look for pieces of the bomb; we picked up several and took them home. Later a policeman arrived and took them away and eventually soldiers moved in to guard the craters against souvenir hunters like us.

At night we often heard the steady flow of German bombers overhead. When Coventry was bombed we stood on the milk stand and watched the lights and flashes coming from that direction.

During the war German and Italian prisoners occupied Loxley Hall and grounds. They worked on local farms. They were followed by American soldiers and then by displaced men from Eastern Europe. Throughout these years Mrs. Sneyd-Kynnersley and her two daughters continued to live there. Finally it was sold to Staffordshire County Council and in 1954 became a school for boys with Special Educational Needs.

NOVEMBER 22 1944

Censorship regulations now permit us to give a detailed retrospective account of air raids in the Uttoxeter District with dates and incidents, and we propose to do so in a series of articles.

The town had 254 'Alerts' the last of which was on September 30 this year, when a Flying Fortress, loaded with bombs, and on fire, from which the crew had baled out was the cause of the warning. The machine was eventually shot down over the Atlantic by Allied fighters.

Thousands of enemy aircraft — several hundreds on some nights — have passed over the town and district, which lie on the route to the big Midlands industrial centres which were the targets of the Nazis. Fortunately the damage caused by enemy bombs has been negligible and there has been no loss of life other than a few animals.

On the night of Sunday, June 30-July 1, 1940, although no 'Alert' was sounded, 20 high explosive bombs dropped in the Abbots Bromley, Hoar Cross and Loxley areas without causing casualties.

During the early hours of Wednesday August 14 1940, twelve empty German parachutes were found in the following places: Six at Middleton Green, Leigh; one at The Dearndales, Uttoxeter, one at Mrs. Shipton's farm, Byrd's-lane, Uttoxeter, three at Doveridge; one at Sudbury.



Loxley Bank Farm was the last farm on the estate to be sold and was bought in 1945 by Mr. Thorley, a brewery director, who two years afterwards sold it to my father.

In 1949 I married Nola Bettson of Woodcock Heath, Kingstone. My parents retired to live at The Firs, Stafford Road while I took over Loxley Bank.

I became involved in the local community at Kingstone where I served as a parish councillor, a school manager and member of the Parochial Church Council.

The area was shocked when the body of eleven year old Susan Maxwell was found in the wood by Loxley layby in 1982. It was eight years before her killer was caught and another four before he was convicted.

I retired in 1991 and moved to Long Walk, an old keeper's cottage on the edge of a wood through which is a path to Loxley Hall. Near to the path is a folly built from the carved stone front of the old Hall, complete with the Sneyd-Kynnersley coat of arms. I have a postcard of it, known locally as Robin Hood's Chapel. Legend has it that Robin Hood became engaged to Maid Marion in the wood. In Springtime it is carpeted with snowdrops, wood anemones, daffodils and bluebells. At the side of the house is an oblong field still called the Nursery. It was previously used to grow trees and shrubs for the estate.

Across the parkland is a high stone memorial; the inscription reads:

Craven Kynnersley Squire
Shot here on Dec. 26th 1736
Age 25

Craven Kynnersley was married to Jane Bagot, daughter of Sir Edward Bagot, 4th Baron of Blithfield.

The tenant who occupied Long Walk from 1974 - 1989 was a fortune teller. The swaying trees, yew hedges and black spitting cats made an ideal background for her successful business.

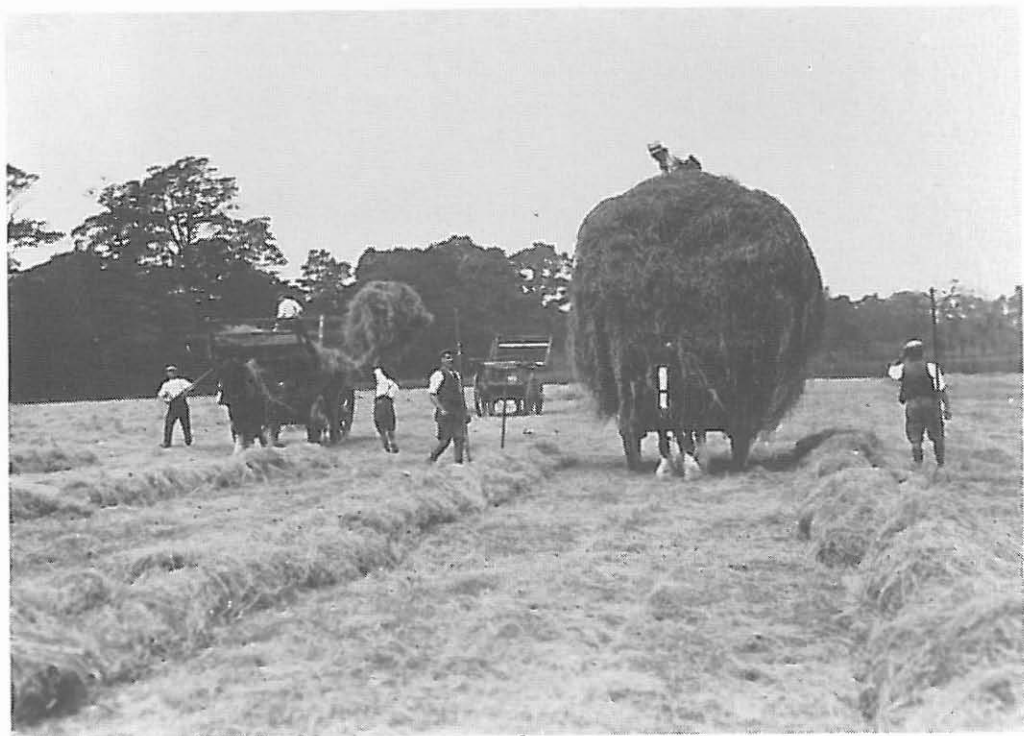
My youngest son, Colin, now farms at Loxley Bank. In 1991 he married Pat Hamer-Price from Meretown, Shropshire and they have two daughters, Alana and Lauren.

My eldest son, Charles, has a restaurant near Shrewsbury. He married Pauline Shortland and they have three sons, James, Matthew and Edward.

I have several photographs taken of haymaking at Loxley by Alfred McCann in the early 1930's showing how much farming has changed in the last sixty years.



Ted Shaw bringing a load of hay
up the drive to Loxley Bank Farm



Haymaking at Loxley in the 1930's.

Left to right

Joe Bebbington - Bill Morris
Reg Whittaker George Wright Robert Whittaker
Postcard courtesy of Mrs. Nola Whittaker of Loxley.

R.I.P. Harold Whittaker died on 5 May 1998.

Before moving on we'll let Ted Bebbington, whose father Joseph Bebbington worked for the Whittaker family for fifty years, tell his interesting tale.

TED BEBBINGTON'S STORY

Gayboys' Market, Uttoxeter, my father's 50 years
of farming with Whittakers, turning a ploughed
field into a meadow in two days, walking to school
at Kingstone, Loxley Hall, home for
American soldiers, Italian P.O.W's and
Eastern European D.P's, 15 Black soldiers in a Jeep,
Cordite for British Bombs at Loxley,
German bombs at Leese Hill, plane crashes at
Loxley and Burndhurst, Burndhurst Mill,
floods in winter, the Land Girl who changed
my life, filling in the railway tunnel at
Gravelly Bank, Susan Maxwell's murder,
ancient road at Gratwich

My name is Edward (Ted) Bebbington. My parents Joseph and Laura (nee Bartram) Bebbington lived at the Long Walk Cottage, Loxley Green where I was born on 8 September 1920. My father, Joseph Bebbington worked for 50 years for three generations of the Whittaker family in the Loxley area. My father was born at Leigh but was taken by his parents, my grandparents Edwin and Grandmother Bebbington to Bramshall. My grandfather used to be a roadman in Bramshall. I remember he rode a three-wheeled cycle when he came to visit us at Loxley Green.

He remembered going to the annual Gayboys' Market, Uttoxeter on the first market after Christmas Day. Farmers and would-be farm workers met in the market and engagements were made for a twelve month period. The contract was 'bonded' by the gift of a shilling in a similar way to recruiting sergeants in the Army who clinched the enlistment of a recruit with the Queen's Shilling!



My grandfather Edwin Bebbington and his
three-wheeler bike which he used in his job
as a roadman in Bramshall

When my father first engaged himself to work for Robert Whittaker he knew he was contracted to work for him for a year and would only get paid after a year. In an interview with a local paper in 1959 my father said, "It was on January 1, 1909 that Mr. Whittaker hired me for twelve months at a wage of £26 for the year. But I didn't stick at twelve months - it's been 50 years." Mr. Whittaker was farming at Wall Heath at that time.

Four months after joining Mr. Whittaker my father married my mother, Laura Bartram of Marston Montgomery. They had six sons and one daughter - Jack, Joe, Roland, Reginald, myself, Eric and my sister Laura, who died this year. There is only Reg and myself left.

My father remembered starting off on 15/- (75p.) a week and a cottage. The hours were from 5 a.m. until you went to bed. All the work was done with horses. My father used to say, "You can talk to a horse but you can't talk to a tractor." He did admit that a tractor, or iron horse as he called it, could do three times the work of a horse on a task like ploughing.

The Whittakers took great pride in their horses. They showed Shire horses and cattle at agricultural shows all over the Midlands. They never came back without a prize. My father often recalled an amusing incident while he was working for the Whittaker family. A contractor brought in to do ploughing jobs had ploughed the wrong field. My father and Robert Whittaker worked for days turning back the sods on every furrow until every sign of ploughing had vanished. The field has been known for years as 'The Turn Back Field.'

In my father's day there were no buses or cars and people walked or used a bone-shaker as the early bicycles were called.

In 1949 my father received a long service award and diploma for 40 years continuous service with one farming family. He received the award at the County Show of that year. Ten years later, after half a century with the one family, he was presented with a gold watch and a cheque from the Whittaker family.

As children we used to play round Loxley Hall and Robin Hood's Chapel at Long Walk; the Kynnersley's were still living there.

I went to school at Kingstone. It was a two mile walk. One lad, Jack Steeples, walked from Loxley Park along the Stafford - Uttoxeter Road, up to Loxley Green and then on to Kingstone. There were no cars or buses on the road in those days. We often used to play whip and top on the way to and from school.

Miss Reddington, one of our teachers, cycled to school from Uttoxeter. The Head Teacher was Mr. Beech. Another teacher, Miss Rowe, stayed in lodgings in Kingston village.

I left school at Christmas 1934 and went to work on a farm for Mr. Mycock at Spath opposite Stevenson's garage. I started on New Year's Day and had a twelve month contract. It was very strict in those days and if we went out we had to be back in the farmhouse by 9 o'clock. Board and lodgings were part of our wages.

During the Second World War American soldiers stayed at Loxley Hall. At first there were black soldiers. They used to have right antics in their jeeps. I remember seeing fourteen of them on one jeep going to the Shrewsbury Arms pub at Kingstone. It seems that the black American soldiers were not allowed out on the same night as the white American soldiers, to prevent the black and white soldiers fighting each other.

When the Americans left Italian prisoners of war (P.O.W's) were kept at the Hall. The prisoners worked on the farms. One of the older Italian prisoners named Tiro helped at Caverswall Farm where I worked. He used to make baskets from the willows growing on the bank of the River Blythe.

When the Italians had gone they put Displaced Persons - D.P's of all nationalities, but mostly East Europeans, Estonians, Poles etc. at Loxley Hall. One of them is buried in Bramshall Church-yard.

During the war nine massive sheds were built by the R.A.F. to store cordite powder for bombs. The cordite arrived on trains at Bramshall Junction where a special railway track ran to the sheds. The steam engines shunted the waggons off the main line where diesel engines took over to take the waggons into the sheds. The authorities didn't want to risk a spark from the steam engines igniting the cordite in the stores. The waggons were shunted right into the sheds where they were offloaded onto the platforms on either side. A lot of people worked at the Bramshall site. I believe the cordite was transported from there to factories making bombs and ammunition. Swynnerton Ordnance Factory near Stone could well have received cordite from Bramshall.

In the Loxley area we were on the receiving end of German bombs. German bombers would regularly pass overhead on their way to bomb the industrial cities of the Black Country - Birmingham, Coventry, Solihull, Wolverhampton etc. There was a blackout in operation during the hours of darkness and no lights could be shown to make it as difficult as possible for the bombers. I was outside one night when German incendiary bombs fell on Leese Hill. I heard them whistling as they fell and I could see them coming down. The bombs exploded harmlessly in a field. Had they landed in the nearby wood

they would have caused quite a bonfire. The army were on the scene very quickly and stopped anyone going along the road at Leese Hill. Anyone wishing to go to Kingstone had to go along the Stafford road and turn off at Grindley. The story told locally was that one of the farm labourers had gone across the yard with a lantern - the German bombers had seen it and dropped their bombs thinking it was a target.

During the war a British plane crashed at Loxley Green. A British plane also came down in a field opposite Burndhurst Mill at Lower Loxley. It was all very hush-hush during the war and only local people knew about the plane crashes. A tank crashed into the side of the bridge at Burndhurst Mill. I don't think anyone was injured. A lot more vehicles have crashed into that bridge in the past fifty years.

My brother Roland Bebbington was a tenant at Burndhurst Mill. The mill was owned by a Mr. Riley whose family were shoe manufacturers in Stafford. Mr. Riley held the fishing rights along the River Blythe. When he died my brother bought the mill.

Before my brother a Mr. K. Nonelly leased the mill. Local farmers brought their corn by horse and cart to have it ground at the mill. Mr. Nonelly also raised goats. The Nonellys had a son Frank who lives at Leigh with his wife and two children, a boy and a girl.

I worked for Mr. Gallimore at Caverswall Farm, just up the road from Burndhurst Mill. I was there for five years. In those days we did everything on the farm using horses - ploughing, cutting, threshing, fertilising, transporting - the whole cycle.

When my brother Roland took over the tenancy of Burndhurst Mill I used to help him. Together we'd lift the mill stones to clean them and clear the grooves out.



Roland Bebbington on the bridge
over the River Blithe at Burndhurst Mill

Mopping-up again at the old mill by the stream

Farmer Mr. Roland Bebbington and his family have been mopping-up at Burndhurst Mill, Loxley, after their second flood in less than a year. Many people imagine the old mill by the stream to be an idyllic setting but sometimes life can become a nightmare. Water lay a foot deep in the living room last March and during the recent heavy rain the River Blithe crept to within half an inch of the top of the doorstep.

Cattle had to be moved through the floods to higher ground and as the level of the river rose the family began to move furniture upstairs as a precaution.

Since the family moved to the mill in 1939 they have been the victims of many floods.

Mr. Bebbington recalls the worst flood in 1947 when water lay three feet deep in the house.

He has had a few narrow escapes. One year when he was clearing out the mill sluice gates he was swept away by the water.

"It took me about four or five yards, I happened to catch hold of the mill wheel."

He said he was black and blue with the force of the water banging him against the wheel.

In the recent floods three cows and 14 calves had to be moved out of their flooded sheds to another higher farm.

They moved the cattle by tractor and trailer and at one point Mr. Bebbington said flood water came into the tractor cab. "The front wheels were completely submerged in water."

Mr. Bebbington said he had had more help in the flood than ever before and he thanked

Mr. Jack Gallimore and his two children, from Popinjay Farm, and Mr. Stan Summers, from Stowe-by-Chartley, for their help.

Frequent flooding has prompted Mr. Bebbington to change from dairy to beef farming. "It's no use for dairy animals to be flooded out. You lose a lot of money."

He said the floods put the cows off producing milk and the yield is low for days.

And he added it was not a pleasant experience moving animals in water. "They get frightened and they don't want to be moved."

"I think when we go on to beef altogether and we have the animals outside we won't have this trouble."

Mr. Bebbington was not the only person affected by the Blithe flooding. Mr. David Smith and his family, who live at the neighbouring Caverswall Cottage, returned from a shopping expedition to find their home cut off by water. They were unable to get through the floods so they spent the night with relatives.

A lot of extra work is caused by the floods, said Mr. Bebbington. Ditches have to be cleaned out, drains have to be unblocked and all the wet animal-bedding has to be cleaned out of the sheds.

He said some hay in the barn has been spoilt and the water has made a mess of the front garden.

Mr. Bebbington and his wife Marjorie have been the victims of floods for 39 years, and he says you learn something new every time there is one.

Now at 66, Mr. Bebbington is thinking of retiring and handing over to his two sons David and Howard.

When the local farmers came to have their corn ground the bags of corn were lifted by a hoist to the third floor by power from the water wheel. There the bags were unloaded into a hopper or funnel which allowed the grain to trickle onto the stones where it was ground into cattle feed by the revolving round stones. In those days the mill was regularly flooded in winter. I'm sure there's not the same volume of water coming down the River Blythe today. The fields were regularly flooded for long periods during the winter months.

I remember the old railway line, the GNR Stafford to Uttoxeter Line. I can remember the Milk Train which collected the milk from all the farms. I also remember when the line closed. I filled in the railway cutting at the back of Lower Loxley Farm up to the tunnel at Alderey Bank. The face of the tunnel had to be bricked up first. We put in 25 yards of clay up to the mouth of the tunnel. The cutting was filled in with household and industrial waste. It is now farmland. The only sign there was a railway is the railway bridge across the fields by Lower Loxley Farm. There was a stream that used to run through the tunnel. I don't know what's happened to it. The farmer at Crowtree's Farm used to fetch water from the stream.

At the time of the discovery of 11 year old Susan Maxwell's body in August 1982 I along with lots of other men in the area was interviewed and asked for my movements.

There is, I believe, a very old road at Gratwich which goes past Blythe Meadows Farm and on towards Bank Top Farm in the direction of Chartley Castle.

During the war while I was working at Caverswall Farm I got to know one of the Land Girls working there. Millicent Berrisford originally came from the vicinity of Bucknall, now part of Stoke-on-Trent. She became housemaid to Mr. Carter, a horse dealer and his wife from Werrington. Mr. Carter hired out horses for riding. He taught Millie to ride and soon she was delivering and collecting horses for him all over the area. When she wasn't on horse-back either delivering or fetching, she travelled by bus. Once she collected a horse from Mr. Harry Statham of Bramshall. Millie got to know and like the area round Uttoxeter. She gave up her job and came to work on a farm at Beamhurst where my brother Eric Bebbington worked. Later Millie moved to Caverswall Farm. We worked together for two years before we married on 2 June 1945. We have five children, Ian (Frank), Roland, Michael, Patrician and Susan.



The masthead of the Land Girl newspaper from May 4, 1946, priced 3d -



FIFTY years ago the couple pose with the bridal party after tying the knot.

Wedding group 2 June 1945

Back Row L to R: Wilfred Derry - best man;
Mr. and Mrs. Bebbington; Mrs. Berrisford

Front Row L to R: Laura Bebbington - bridesmaid;
Ted and Millie Bebbington;
John William (Jack) Berrisford
who gave away the bride.

The little bridesmaid is Anne Wilson,
married name Meridith.

Golden memories, 50 years on

A COUPLE are celebrating after a wartime romance blossomed into a 50 year love affair.

Millie Berrisford was a Land Army girl when she met farm employee Ted Bebbington while working at Caverswall Farm, Loxley.

The couple, who now live at Church Lane, Bramshall, were married on June 2 at St Mary's Church, Bucknall.

Mrs Bebbington first visited Uttoxeter when she arrived at the Wellington Inn to pick up a horse.

"I was working as a housemaid for a horse dealer at Werrington and helped out by riding the horses."

Having collected the horse from the Inn she rode the 15 miles back to Werrington.

"I can't remember how long it took but I felt a bit bow-legged when I got back," she said.

It was her work with the horses that persuaded Millie, now 72, to give up her job as a housemaid and join the Land Army.

Her first job was on a farm at Beamhurst when she worked with her future husband's brother.

She moved to Caverswall Farm and worked alongside Ted for two years before they married.

Mr Bebbington, now aged 74, remained on the land until



GOLDEN moment for Ted and Millie.

1951 when he joined the Uttoxeter Rural District Council as a refuse collector.

In 1974 he transferred to Staffordshire County Council and retired after 29 years' council work.

The couple, who have five children, 11 grandchildren

and four great grandchildren, plan to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary quietly at home.

Mr Bebbington told the Post & Times: "Like most couples we have had our ups and downs but we have always pulled together."

Although Ted Bebbington's story has taken us as far as Burndhurst Mill we'll return to the Loxley Cross-roads and go down Bennets Lane or Loxley Lane and up to the village of Bramshall where Richard Statham lives with his wife Jean.

RICHARD STATHAM'S STORY

Statham and Buckley ancestors
going back 180 years, Thomas Fradgley,
Uttoxeter architect, from rectory to pub,
panoramic views from Bramshall,
underground reservoirs, original Uttoxeter
race course at Bramshall, village school,
the Loxley Estate and the Bramshall Estate,
Strawberry Farm Garden Centre,
ghost at Lower Loxley Farm

I am T.R. Statham now in my middle seventies, the sole remaining one of three children descended from two Bramshall farming families whose ancestry can be traced back some 180 years.

The Stathams and the Buckleys - my mother's maiden name was Buckley - farmed ten different farms on the Loxley Estate as tenants and landlords back as far as 1680. My own interest in genealogy was encouraged by my father's brother-in-law W.G. Torrance who updated Francis Redfern's History of Uttoxeter. He, like myself, had the great benefit of relatives living to a ripe old age.

My great grandfather Samuel Buckley was the third generation born at Dogleasow, Pidgeon Hay Lane. Pidgeon Hay Lane runs from Waterloo Farm on the Tean Road to Bramshall. The land had been bought from Sir John Degge. The family also owned Park Fields, Kiddlestitch which was the retirement home of the Buckleys. Park Fields was sold in 1880 by William Buckley who then built Park Grange on some fifty three acres of land. It is now John McCann's land.

Great grandfather Samuel Buckley was one of eleven children married to Elms Farm, Bramshall in 1836. Elms Farm is now owned by my nephew Robert Charles Buckley Statham.

My grandfather Thomas Cooper Buckley was very friendly with Thomas Fradgley, the Uttoxeter architect who designed the new St. Lawrence Church at Bramshall in 1835. Great grandfather and his brothers actually helped to build the church. I have a photocopy of a print of the old St. Lawrence Church. Thomas Fradgley also designed Uttoxeter Town Hall, the Memorial kiosk in the Market Place, Stramshall Church and Moorlands, Byrds Lane. He, his wife Lydia (nee Warner) and infant son are buried at Bramshall.

Bramshall used to be a parish in its own right and covered an area to the North of the Stone Road. The Loxley Estate was in the parish of Uttoxeter. In 1920 the two parishes were united as Uttoxeter with Bramshall and Loxley Parish.

The vicarage was sold in 1920 to Jack Deaville, a member of an old Uttoxeter family and he with Tom Bagshaw set up a successful veterinary practice in the old vicarage.

Harry Braine - butcher by trade - now owns the curate's house and holds the title deed.

The Warners were business people in the area who also farmed at Broad Oak, Stocks Farm and Parks Farm - our farm - from the early seventeenth century.

The present pub, The Butcher's Arms, was the original parish rectory. It became a public house about the time of the construction of the Stafford - Uttoxeter Railway during the 1860's. Apparently the construction workers on the line demanded local facilities and the old rectory was turned into a beer house. A new rectory was built by the railway company. The line was opened in 1867.

Our house at Bramshall Park Farm is near the top of a long hill which overlooks Uttoxeter. On a clear day you can see a few Power Stations - Donnington, Branson and Burton to the east and Rugeley to the south. To the north-east you can see the tail-end of the Pennine Chain as they peter out near Stanton and Ellastone. On clear days you can also see Denstone College and if conditions are right you can see the explosions at Cauldon Lowe as part of the quarrying operation for making cement. When the wind blows from the north you can hear the blasting which takes place every day at 4 p.m.

Just below our land is a large underground reservoir served by numerous underground springs. The reservoir supplies Uttoxeter with its water supply and the elevation of the reservoir provides the water pressure to serve the area.

The remains of one or two old Fish Pools can still be seen near the reservoir.

In 1809 a dispute arose between the local land owner Lord Willoughby de Broke and Uttoxeter inhabitants about payment for the water supply from the stream on Lord Willoughby's land to Uttoxeter where it terminated at the conduit in Market Square. For at least seventy years Uttoxeter inhabitants had paid 7/6d. annually to Lord Willoughby and 2/6d. to the tenant through whose land the stream had been diverted to supply the town.

Certain stipulations had been tied in with the supply of water to Uttoxeter - none of Lord Willoughby's tenants would be called upon to carry any baggage for soldiers quartered in or marching through or from Uttoxeter. If this happened Lord Willoughby would increase the rent of the water supply or stop it altogether. The stipulation had apparently been broken. It was also stipulated that none of Lord Willoughby's tenants should be called upon to serve as jurymen. This agreement had also been breached. To make matters worse for about twelve years Uttoxeter inhabitants had not paid their annual rent for the water supply. Lord Willoughby now threatened to cut off the town's supply by removing the dam and allowing the stream to return to its natural course thus depriving Uttoxeter inhabitants of its water supply. To achieve this he employed the services of a C. Abbott of the Inner Temple, London. We don't know the outcome of the case but one thing is sure, the people of Uttoxeter still receive water from the stream at Bramshall.

A spring which feeds my fish pond flows untapped through a culvert under John McCann's farm yard into a small stream down to the Hockley Brook. The Hockley Brook starts two miles west of Dagdale and flows under the Stone Road near there, under Bennett's Lane not far from the railway crossing at Bramshall and under the Stafford Road by the Hockley Crossing and goes on to join the River Dove.

Nearly opposite us is the original course for the Uttoxeter Races. It must have been heavy going in those days.

In bygone days horse-drawn coaches passed through Bramshall from Uttoxeter on their way to Newcastle passing through Leigh and keeping to the high ground.

Up until the 1900's Bramshall village boasted a parish school. This was run by the redoubtable Miss Elizabeth Tranter who taught for forty years in the Old School in what used to be until recently the village post office.

When Bramshall School closed children from the village attended Heath School in Uttoxeter. Most of the pupils walked the four mile round trip daily.

Records of Bramshall's past show that the village was divided between two powerful ancient families. The village landlords at the turn of the century were Lord Willoughby de Broke of Compton Verney in Warwickshire and the Earl of Stafford.

The largest portion of Bramshall village - some 3,934 acres - belonged to the Loxley Estate, property of the Shrewsburys and later owned by the Sneyd-Kynnersleys, whose seat was Loxley Hall across the valley from Bramshall off the Stafford-Uttoxeter Road.

The Loxley Estate took in all the land on both sides of the Stafford - Uttoxeter Road including The Plough Inn, Blounts Green, Highfields Hall, now a Residential Home, and farms and cottages in the Bramshall and Loxley areas.to Burndhurst Mill.

The Willoughby de Broke family owned farms, cottages and land containing 1,113 acres to the north of the Stone Road called the Bramshall Estate. It was sold off in 1906. The Loxley Estate was also sold off in 1916.

My parents were John Henry and Elizabeth Statham (nee Cooper Buckley) who farmed at The Elms Farm, Bramshall for sixty years. When they retired my brother John took over the running of the farm.

GRAND OPENING
OF THE NEW
SATURDAY MARKET
UTTOXETER.

ON

Saturday, January 2, 1904.

At **3 o'clock**, in the **MARKET PLACE**,

The Chairman of the Uttoxeter Urban Council,

A. C. BUNTING, Esq., J.P., C.C.,

Supported by the Council, and the leading Traders of the Town,
will formally declare the Market open.

MUSIC by an EXCELLENT BRASS BAND.

The Usual Attractions, Roundabouts, Hobby Horses, &c.

AT 6 O'CLOCK, A
GRAND TORCH-LIGHT PROCESSION,
AND VARIOUS OTHER ATTRACTIONS.

Cheap Market Fares, from all Local Stations, both this and every Saturday Market Day; for further particulars of which see the Railway Companies' Posters.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

One of the many interesting advertising
bills in Richard Statham's collection

In 1947 I married Jean Susan Goodall of Somersal, Derbyshire. We had one son Stuart who died tragically in 1963 aged 15 from Leukemia and a daughter Eleanor. We have one grand-daughter Ann.

In 1983 we sold off parts of our farm. Part of it is now the Strawberry Farm Garden Centre and some sixty acres of arable land were sold to a local farmer.

We retained seven acres of land with 400 fruit trees. We have a small fish pool fed by the local springs. We've got to keep the pool covered with a net to protect the fish from herons.

Apart from my own memories I can still remember many stories told to me by older people when I was a lad. I also have in my possession some very old diaries and scrap books with newspaper cuttings going back many years. One newspaper article is particularly interesting in that it refers to a ghost at Lower Loxley Farm on the main Stafford - Uttoxeter road.

Post and Times, August 4 1995

Be polite – let them pass

FARMERS have been reminded to let traffic pass when travelling in slow moving vehicles or machinery.

The Staffordshire Executive Committee of the NFU wants all farmers to be considerate to motorists.

"We all know how frustrating it can be to be held up, even for five minutes, especially on a long journey," said Tim Eaton, senior policy adviser for NFU West Mid-

lands Region.

"But it is unavoidable that machinery has to be moved from field to field at this time of year," said Mr Eaton.

"Getting the appreciation of the public by showing consideration can work wonders for morale," he stressed.

He also urged farmers to ensure they site amber flashing beacons in the correct spot on top of the cab: "This is essential for road safety."

A UTTOXETER couple were among 4,000 who joined the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh at their golden wedding celebration garden party this week.

Dick and Jean Statham, from Bramshall, were among the huge gathering on the lawn of the royal palace.

Mr Statham, a retired farmer, described it "as a day to remember."

They were one of 70 golden wedding couples from the county chosen in a draw of 700 who applied to attend.

The royal couple, who wed in November 1947, entertained some of the thousands married in the same year.

They provided a magnificent buffet and the caterers served up 17,000 cups of tea, 9,000 scones, 9,000 fruit tarts and 17,000 slices of cake.

About 10 varieties of sandwiches were on offer which were all neatly cut in squares and minus any crusts.

"The catering was excellent," said Mr Statham. "No one had to wait long for anything."

Three of the fancy cakes decorated with '50' and 'ER' found their way back to Bramshall.

"We asked one of the waitresses if it was allowed," said Mrs Statham who is planning to preserve the unique Royal souvenirs.

During the afternoon the couple were able to wander around the 60-acre gardens.

Mr Statham said: "The lawns were perfection. You could not see where the mower had been. It was like a green carpet had been laid."

"The herbaceous border was about half a mile long and ten metres deep and there was a beautiful lake with more wildlife than a zoo."

"It was hard to tell you were in the middle of London," said his wife, who wore a navy hat, complimentary jacket and a navy floral pleated skirt.



FANCY THAT: The couple and the Queen's iced fancies.

It was not the first time the couple had visited the palace. Mr Statham was a guest when their daughter Eleanor received her gold Duke of Edinburgh award and his wife met the Duke when she was an organiser of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.

The couple, who also had a son Stuart, who died at the age of 15, were married in February 1947 at St Mary's Parish Church, Uttoxeter, because the village church at Mrs Statham's home village of Somersal was cut off by heavy snow.

We leave Bramshall village and go back down Loxley Lane. At the bottom of the valley we cross the Crewe - Derby line. The Stafford - Uttoxeter railway ran along the line at this point and if you look to the right you can see one hundred yards away to the left a wide avenue of land between some trees. Here the line branched off to Stafford. One August afternoon during the very hot summer of 1995 I walked along the old track. I was able to walk as far as the old brick bridge over the line at Lower Loxley. As I walked along for about a mile or so it was like entering another world. It was so quiet and peaceful and nature had taken over. Later on I was to find other stretches of the old railway, some completely overgrown and impassable. What a wonderful nature trail the old track would make. Already at the end of the line in Stafford part of the old track has been made into a cycle track by Stafford Borough Council. Perhaps if Uttoxeter Town Council made a bid for Millenium money the Clog and Knocker Nature Trail could become an amenity for the people of Uttoxeter and the surrounding villages. It's nice to dream.

OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES

Going back up Bennets Lane we cross the small bridge over Picknalls Brook. During the Second World War some German bombs fell in the fields and woods nearby. At the top of the hill is the junction with the Stafford - Uttoxeter road and on the right hand side is a lay-by which was once part of the old A518. It was in the small wood by the lay-by that an awful tragedy unfolded one August day in 1982.

SUSAN MAXWELL

On Friday, 30 July 1982 at about 4 p.m. eleven year old Susan Maxwell set off on the short walk from the tennis club in Coldstream, Scotland to her home across the river in Cornhill on Tweed. It was the first time Susan had been allowed to walk home on her own from the tennis club where she had played with her friend. On her way home she disappeared in broad daylight as if into thin air.

When local enquiries and searches failed to find her the search for Susan went nationwide and Susan's mother, Liz Maxwell, made an appeal on the Jimmy Young Radio One Show for help in finding her daughter.

On Thursday, 12 August 1982 a small body was found in the wood by the lay-by at Loxley but it wasn't until late in the afternoon of Friday, 13 August that it was identified as that of Susan Maxwell who had disappeared two weeks earlier.

House to house inquiries had begun in the Uttoxeter area. All men were asked where they had been on 30 July, the day Susan went missing. They were also asked if they had recently visited Scotland or knew anyone who had.

A police incident van was set up on the lay-by at Loxley and at Uttoxeter Police Station. The area where Susan's body was found was cordoned off and about forty police officers were involved in the inch by inch search of the wood and surrounding area.

Susan's body was taken to her home town for burial. Beside her in the coffin the police at her parent's request had placed her teddy bear and a last poignant note from her grieving parents, 'Sorry we missed you on that day, because it meant we could not say a proper good-bye. We love you and miss you, all of us do and we hope one day we will see you again.'



Victim: Susan Maxwell, 11, had played tennis

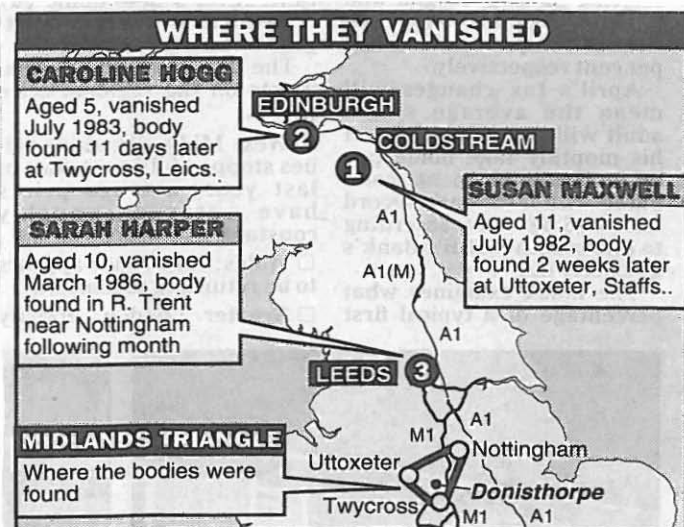
It was to be another twelve years, two further murders of young girls, before the chance sighting of the abduction of a six year old girl in Scotland led to the arrest and conviction of Robert Black, 47, a van driver whose work took him all over the country, for the murder of Susan Maxwell.

On Thursday, 20 May 1994 Robert Black received ten life sentences for the murders of Susan Maxwell, 11, Caroline Hogg, 5 and Sarah Harper, 10. The jury at Newcastle Crown Court took just two days to reach their verdict.

Robert Black was already serving a life sentence for the abduction and indecent assault of the six year old girl at Stow, Borders, Scotland on 14 July 1990.

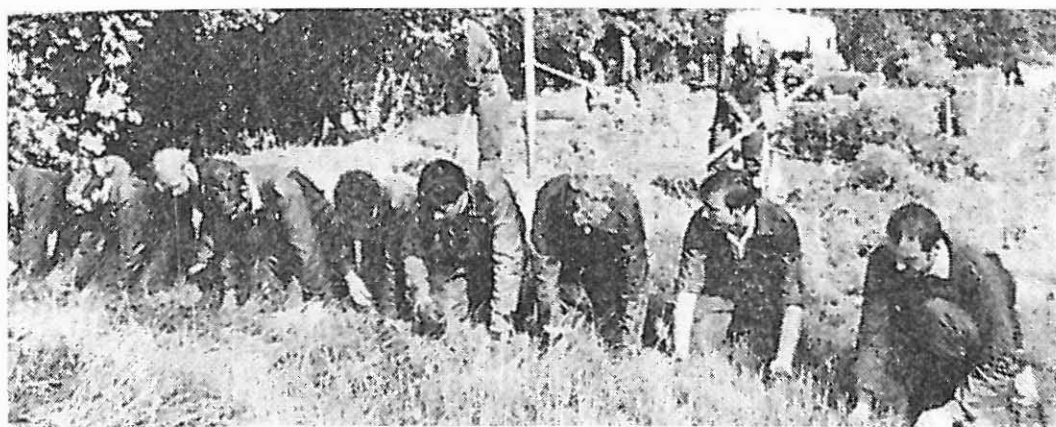
Police forces in Britain and Europe are investigating any links with the disappearance and murder of young girls in this country and abroad. Among the missing girls whose fate is being linked with Black is Genette Tate who disappeared in August 1978.

The twelve year Police inquiry cost up to £5 million and involved 22 tons of paperwork. More than 186,000 people were interviewed in the twelve years with up to 400 officers deployed. 5000 statements were taken in Uttoxeter alone.





Murder squad detectives comb the copse where Susan's body was found last week.



Police comb the grass for clues near to where Susan's body was found

Susan's last walk

Clip-clop of murdered

girl's shoes haunts

me still, says angler

Black, who delivered advertising posters around England and Scotland, was driving a white Fiat van at the time of Susan's kidnap, the jury has heard. Delivery records, petrol vouchers and other sightings of Transit-style vans placed him close by when all the girls were abducted, it is alleged. The trial continues.

By ROGER SCOTT

THE clip-clop of a little girl's shoes made angler Raymond Wooding look up as he stared into the river from a bridge.

It was 11-year-old Susan Maxwell making her care-free way home, swinging her tennis racket after a game with a school friend.

'That day still haunts me,' Mr Wooding told a court yesterday.

Minutes later, the happy little girl vanished as if into thin air, unnoticed by people enjoying the hot July sunshine and by motorists on the busy road through

Cornhill, Northumberland. Thirteen days later her body was found dumped in a wood 264 miles away in the Midlands. Her killer was van driver Robert Black, Newcastle upon Tyne Crown Court has been told.

Black, 47, denies her kidnap and murder in 1982. He also denies unlawfully imprisoning and murdering five-year-old Caroline Hogg from Edinburgh in July 1983, kidnapping and murdering Sarah Harper, ten, from Morley,

West Yorkshire, in March 1986 and kidnapping Teresa Thornhill from Radford, Nottinghamshire in April 1988.

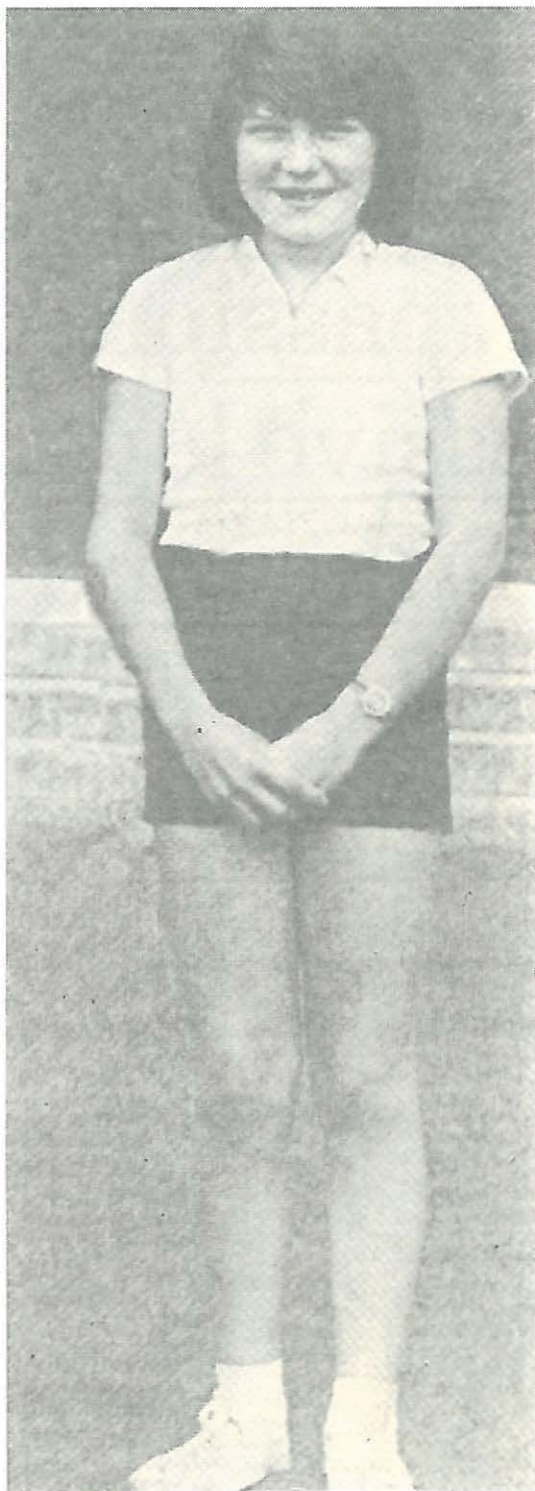
Mr Wooding, business manager for a pharmaceutical company, from Ripon, North Yorkshire, told the jury he had been on the bridge across the Tweed to gauge fishing conditions at about 4.10pm. Traffic was 'nose-to-tail' and children splashing in the water made the prospect of catching anything nil, he said.

'I heard a sound that made me look up. It was a little girl and her feet were clip-clopping.' He noticed how smartly dressed she was, in pale yellow matching shorts and top.

Susan — on the way home after being allowed out alone for the first time in her life — was walking briskly and overtook him as he strolled back to his car, he said.

Ten minutes earlier, nurse Veronica Currie saw an off-white Transit-style van with curtains over the back windows parked beside the bridge, the court heard. She has since died, but her statement was read to the court.

The last picture of sports-loving Susan Maxwell, left, taken only weeks before she vanished 'into thin air' in 1982.



Susan Maxwell murder hunt is over at last

THE JAILING of killer Robert Black for the murder of schoolgirl Susan Maxwell has brought to an end the biggest police investigation in Utttoxeter's history.

The discovery of the body of the 11 year old in August 1982 in a wood on the edge of the town sparked off a nationwide manhunt.

Utttoxeter lorry driver Arthur Meadows made the grim find in a copse near a layby at Loxley as he set off to deliver a load of dairy products to a Scottish depot.

Mr Meadows from Westlands Road, came across the corpse as he took a short cut through the wood to visit a friend's house at Loxley.

At first he thought he had seen a tailor's dummy buried in the undergrowth and it was not until he had made his delivery that he contacted Utttoxeter police and asked them to check it out.

JAILED

During the afternoon of the following day police confirmed that it was the body of the girl who had been abducted two weeks earlier while walking to her home at Coldstream on the Scottish borders.

Last week, Black, a van driver, was given 10 life sentences at Newcastle upon Tyne Crown Court where he was convicted of the murder of Susan Maxwell and two other schoolgirls Caroline Hogg, aged five, and ten year old

Lorry driver's horrific find of girl's body 11 years ago

by Rosemarie Davies

Sarah Harper.

Caroline's body was dumped in a lay-by at Twycross in Leicestershire while Sarah was thrown into the River Trent at Ratcliffe-on-Soar in Nottinghamshire.

The jury heard that 47 year old Black, formerly of Stamford Hill, north London, was finally trapped after being spotted abducting a six year old girl in a Borders village in July 1990.

Black was eventually charged in August 1991 with what became known as the M1 murders because police believed the killer travelled along the motorway before dumping the bodies.

Despite unprecedented press coverage and huge cash rewards it took pain-staking

work by officers from seven police forces in England and Scotland to capture the killer.

Shortly after the discovery of Susan Maxwell's body the then curate at Utttoxeter, the Rev Peter Miln, urged the killer to give himself up.

In a public appeal to the murderer in September 1982 Mr Miln said: "Caught you will be, if not for this crime, then for some other I appeal to you to give yourself up."

"Now before it is too late. For be assured that the wicked impulse which prompted you to take so young a life will return.

"And one day you will again yield to it."

Mr Miln, who as a member of the town council had recently served as mayor, said it was a tragedy which had "deeply marked our town."

LOXLEY HALL



LOXLEY HALL

Loxley Hall is situated in a prominent position on a hill overlooking the A518 two miles from Utoxeter. From the Hall there are clear views across the Staffordshire countryside. Across a valley on a hill to the north can be seen a picture postcard view of Bramshall village with the tower of St. Lawrence Church drawing the eye. On a clear day you can see the Weaver Hills beyond.

Loxley or Locheslei, is mentioned in the Domesday Book. Before the Normans came Loxley was held by a Saxon freeman called Edmund. After the Norman Conquest William the Conqueror awarded thirty lordships in Staffordshire, Wales and the town of Shrewsbury to Roger de Montgomery or Earl Roger as he is called in the Domesday Book. In Staffordshire Earl Roger held lordships at Loxley, Blithfield, Amerton, Gayton, Tixall, Derrington, Moddershall and Cheddleton to name a few local ones.

In 1067 Roger Montgomery was created 1st Earl of Shrewsbury. Whether or not he was related to the later Earls of Shrewsbury, the Talbots, is a question I have so far been unable to answer. The present Lord Shrewsbury, Charles Henry John Benedict Crofton Chetwynd-Talbot, the 22nd Earl, lives not far from Loxley at Wanfield Hall.

Robert de Toeni, son of William the Conqueror's Standard Bearer, took the name de Stafford when he became first baron of Stafford. He held over sixty lordships in Staffordshire including Cheadle, Tean, Hilderstone, Milwich, Salt, Hopton, Tixall, Ingestre, Gratwich and Bramshall. Bramshall was leased by Robert de Stafford to one of the Bagots.

Earl Roger leased Loxley to Asalin. The Domesday Book recorded that Loxley was a quarter of a hide, or thirty acres. It is recorded as being waste which could mean it was uncultivated, or perhaps laid waste by the Norman invaders. It wasn't all waste for there were four acres of meadowland and an acre of woodland two and a third miles long by three quarters of a mile wide. The value of Loxley in 1086 was twenty shillings.

Nearly a hundred years later Loxley was held by one of the de Ferrers family during the reign of Henry II (1154 - 1189).

The de Ferrers of Ferrieres-Saint-Hilaire, Eure, Normandy came across with William the Conqueror and had been awarded manors and land in Derbyshire. In 1138 Robert de Ferrers was created Earl of Derby but his main seat was in Staffordshire at Tutbury Castle. The de Ferrers also held through marriage Chartley Castle, Beeston Castle and Chester Castle, the two latter both in Cheshire.

In 1266 Robert de Ferrers lost many of his manors including Tutbury as a result of his part in the rebellion against Henry III, though some of these were later restored. Tutbury went to Edmund, Henry III's younger son later to become Earl of Lancaster and has been part of the Duchy of Lancaster and therefore Crown Property ever since.

It looks as if Loxley Hall remained in the de Ferrers family hands for some time after this. In 1327 the Hall and the estate passed through marriage to the Kynnersleys of Kynnersley Castle, Hereford when John Kynnersley married Joanna de Ferrers, sister and heiress of Thomas de Ferrers, Lord of Loxley.

Thomas Kynnersley's tomb of alabaster in Uttoxeter Parish Church shows him in armour as he would have worn during the War of the Roses which ended with the battle of Bosworth Field in 1485 and the beginning of the Tudor reign with Henry VII.

As landlords of a large estate the Kynnersleys would have been important people in their own right renting out farms on the estate to local farmers, employing housekeepers, game keepers, gardeners, coachmen, launderesses and playing an important role in the social and political life of the local community including Uttoxeter. In this social order everyone knew their place and did what was expected of them without question. If you were hard done by there was no redress.

Three Kynnersleys held the office of Sheriff of Staffordshire, the most important member of the executive in the County. The Sheriff was the main agent of the Courts and was responsible for the crown revenues of the shire. He was also responsible for the County Militia - a latter day Territorial Army. The Sheriff was a very powerful man in the County. There were no equal opportunities in those days and women's roles were mainly domestic.

One of the Kynnersley Sheriffs was Craven Kynnersley who met a tragic end. On 26 December 1735 while out hunting on his estate at Loxley his dog jumped up at him causing his gun to discharge and fatally wound him. A stone obelisk marks the spot in a field near Loxley Hall where the tragedy occurred.

The Kynnersleys remained at Loxley Hall for nearly five hundred years.

When the last male Clement Kynnersley died in 1815 Loxley Hall and estate passed to his nephew Thomas Sneyd, a descendant of the Sneyds of Bradwell and Keele and son of Clement Sneyd's eldest sister Penelope, wife of John Sneyd of Bishton. By Royal Licence Thomas Sneyd adopted the name Sneyd-Kynnersley.

In the early 1900's tragedy again struck the Sneyd-Kynnersleys of Loxley Hall. In 1909 Clement Sneyd-Kynnersley died to be followed three years later by his son Gerald. Two lots of death duties so close to each other crippled the family. In 1918 the main part of the Loxley Estate, including many farms, was sold off to pay the tax. The family managed to retain Loxley Hall and the residences of Dearndale and Highfields just off the main road into Uttoxeter from Loxley.

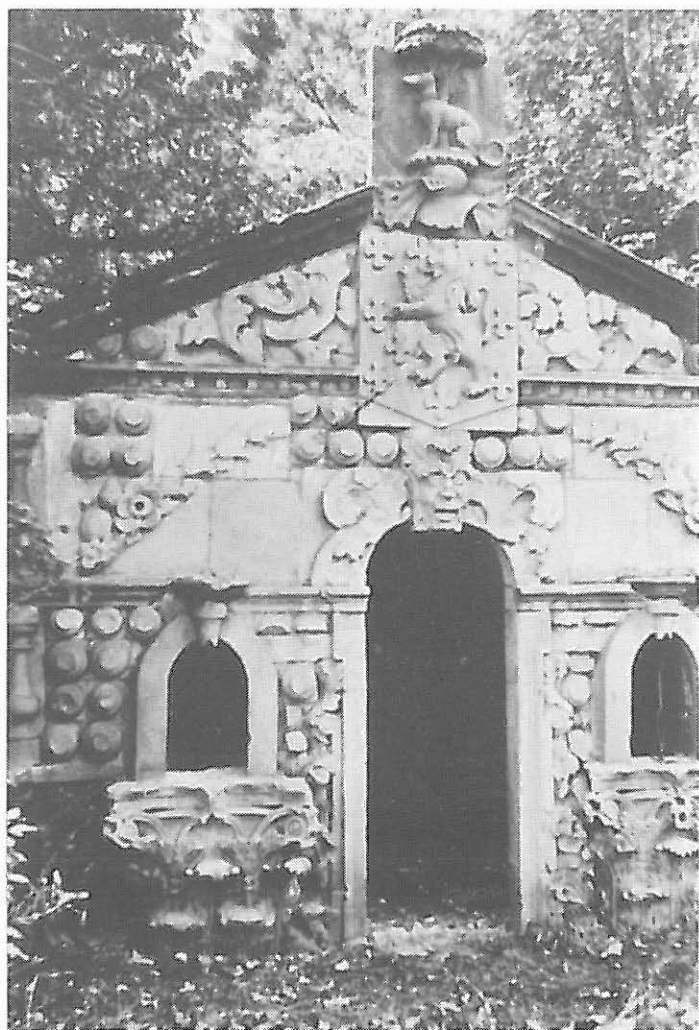
During the Second World War Loxley Hall and its grounds were commandeered by the War Government. While Mrs. Sneyd-Kynnersley and her family lived in one part of the building American Army Officers took over the rest.

The ordinary ranks lived in huts in the grounds of the Hall. When the Americans moved on they were replaced by Prisoners of War and after the war by D.P's - Displaced Persons mainly from Eastern Europe. Each day these men were taken out to work on local farms.

In 1945 Loxley Hall, the Dearndale and Highfields were sold off. The Kynnersley connection with Loxley Hall had come to an end after six hundred and thirty years.

Loxley Hall and its grounds was purchased by Staffordshire County Council and in 1954 became a school for boys with special educational needs.

The present hall was partly rebuilt in 1797. Parts of the original facade which adorned Loxley Hall were used to build a folly in Long Walk known as Robin Hood's Grotto.



Robin Hood's Chapel
in Long Walk Wood, Loxley Hall.

Postcard courtesy of Mrs. Nola Whittaker of Loxley.

From an old postcard of Robin Hood's Grotto the various parts of the Coats of Arms of the Kynnersleys and the Sneyds can be seen. The greyhound under a hawthorn represents the Kynnersleys. The lion passant guardant sable represents the Sneyds. I wonder who or what the face over the door of the grotto represents? Where is the scythe of the Kynnersleys? It is sad to see this piece of local heritage crumbling away soon to be lost for ever to posterity.

A very attractive dovecot still stands dating according to a booklet published by Loxley Hall School from 1740. Dovecots existed in Roman times and in the medieval period and later provided regular supplies of fresh meat and eggs during the winter. Only manor houses or manor farms were allowed to have dovecots to ensure that the lord of the manor's supply of fresh meat and eggs wasn't jeopardised by his own tenants competing with him.

Undoubtedly the Kynnersleys and later the Sneyd-Kynnersleys would have held all the hunting, shooting and fishing rights over their large estate. Woe betide anyone caught poaching in those days. If they were employees of an estate they could well lose their livelihoods and with their families lose the roof over their heads. If they weren't employed by an estate they stood a good chance of imprisonment and even penal servitude in Australia or Tasmania for up to seven years or more. Whether their families were starving or not wasn't an issue.



The Dovecot at Loxley Hall with Laura Foley sitting on the steps. Across the valley and the A518 to the right of the dovecot can be seen Bramshall village with the tower of St. Lawrence Church. The Crewe - Derby railway line runs along the bottom of the valley as once did the Stafford - Uttoxeter Railway, the old Clog & Knocker.

All Our Yesterdays

Uttoxeter Advertiser

Wednesday, August 13, 1947.

Loxley Hall has had a long and varied history to which the recent war has added further chapters.

First the hall was requisitioned and British troops were in occupation, then hutments were erected in the grounds for the use of the American Army. When the Americans vacated the estate it was used as a prisoner of war working camp.

Part of the house is occupied by Mrs and Miss Sneyd Kynnersley and the remainder has been taken over from the War Department by the Ministry of Works and placed at the disposal of the Staffordshire War Agricultural Executive Committee for the accommodation of agricultural workers.

The committee is now replacing about 500 prisoners of war, who have left following repatriation, with former displaced persons, now called European Volunteer Workers. These people are from Ukraina, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia and they have volunteered to come to this country and take employment as directed by the Ministry of Labour.

During last week 200 of these volunteers arrived at Loxley Hall for employment as agricultural workers. The arrival of the first detachment last Tuesday brought about the reunion of the three surviving members of a Latvian family of 20; the newcomer Edwin Natre rejoining his father and twin sister Maitre, after several years.

Wednesday, August 27, 1947.

At a dance held in Uttoxeter Town Hall last week European Volunteer Workers from hostels across the Midlands along with some local residents numbered around 350. Hal Ladds and his band, who provided the music, had given their services free in consideration of the fact that the dance was to raise funds for the residents at Loxley Hall to procure equipment for games.

ROBIN OF LOXLEY

No one knows for certain if there ever was an outlaw called Robin Hood. There are plenty of places in England claiming links with the legendary figure who lived in Sherwood Forest with his band of merry men all dressed in Lincoln Green. Experts with the long bow the noble band robbed the rich merchants and clergy who ventured through the forests.

Before the age of print such legends and traditions were passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation through songs, ballads and folklore. In a time of oppressive laws and harsh penalties - a man could be fined, mutilated or imprisoned for stealing firewood or killing a rabbit - the thought of someone bettering the powerful clergy or the King's Sheriffs would have brought great satisfaction to the peasants or serfs who had few rights.

The earliest known written reference to Robyn Hode is in William Langland's epic poem *Piers Plowman* written in 1377. Sloth, a secular priest, confesses that, "I kan noght perfitly my pater-noster, as
the prest it syngeth,
But I kan rymes of Robyn Hode, and
Randolf, erle of Chester."

The lazy priest couldn't recite the pater-noster but knew the rhymes of Robin Hood and Ranulph, Earl of Chester.

Ranulph, Earl of Chester lived between 1181 - 1232 which would place Robin Hood's time around the same period. This same earl who was a crusader as mentioned earlier built Chartley Castle about 1220.

The first known printed version of the legend of Robin Hood was published in 1495 - A Lytell Geste (Romance) of Robyn Hood. Over the years the tales were added to and embellished and new ballads brought out. Maid Marion may even have French origins from the French medieval ballad 'Robin et Marion'.

Some local people believe that Robin Hood was a de Ferrers, perhaps Robert Ferrers, Earl of Derby who forfeited his lands including Tutbury Castle for taking part in the abortive Barons Rebellion against Henry III in 1264 or 1266.

Local historians Erdeswich and Redfern believe that the Loxley where Robin Hood was said to have been born was the one near Uttoxeter. Certainly the area around Uttoxeter seems to have more connections than other contenders for the birthplace of Robin Hood.

Robin Hood's horn with the initials R.H. used to be kept at Loxley Hall during the time of the Sneyd-Kynnersleys who were descendants of the de Ferrers. In the grounds of Loxley Hall is a folly called Robin Hood's Grotto set in the beautiful Long Walk Wood.

In nearby Abbots Bromley one of the dancers carries a bow and arrow. Another is called Maid Marion.

Two miles from Uttoxeter in the opposite direction across the River Dove in the churchyard at Doveridge, Derbyshire is a mighty yew tree said to be 1400 years old. Its stretching ancient branches supported by wooden props form a natural canopy for what is known as Robin Hood's Chapel. It was here that locals believe that Robin was betrothed to Maid Marion. Set in a glass frame nearby is a verse from the Ballad of Robin Hood:

"Clorinda came by
The Queen of Shepherds was she
With whom he fell in love
Sir Roger, the Parson of Dubridge
was sent for in haste.
He brought his Mass book, and bid them take hands
And joined them in marriage full fast."

About ten miles further east and back in Staffordshire is Tutbury where according to another ballad Robin is said to have attended the Tutbury Bull-running. He had met Clorinda, the Queen of Shepherds perhaps at Doveridge and had fallen in love with her. When he asked her to marry him Clorinda it seems replied,

"It may not be so, gentle sir,
For I must be at Titbury feast;
And if Robin Hood will go thither with me,
I'll make him the most welcome guest."

After the bull-running they called on a parson to wed them. I wonder why she wasn't called Maid Marion then?

Other local traditions would have us believe that Robin and Clorinda were married at Loxley and that they spent their honeymoon there.

It's difficult to imagine that most of the countryside was covered by dense forests. The area around Uttoxeter was covered by the Needwood Forest which linked up to Cannock Chase to the south west. Sherwood Forest, where Robin Hood and his merry men lived and carried out their romanticised robberies, lay to the east of the Needwood Forest and covered wide areas of Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire. So it is quite possible that if Robin Hood existed and had been born at Loxley near Uttoxeter he could easily have made his way to Sherwood Forest. If Robin Hood's father was a forester as some would have us believe, then it would be quite possible that the family moved there to find work.

No one will ever know for certain if Robin Hood ever existed but the people around Uttoxeter will continue to believe that the famous outlaw was born at Loxley on the Stafford-Uttoxeter road.

Miss Beck of Uttoxeter told me that in his History of Uttoxeter Francis Redfern wrote of an ancient horn at Loxley Hall and said to have been Robin Hood's Horn. It had on it the initials R.H. and also three horseshoes set in a shield, part of the arms of the de Ferrers. Robin Hood was reputed to have been a de Ferrers.



Robin Hood's Horn



Seal of Robert de Ferrers - Earl of Derby

OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES

The road to Stafford from Loxley Hall has been improved in the last few years. It descends quite steeply until you reach Lower Loxley Farm where twice a day, morning and evening, the frantic traffic grinds to a halt to allow the Friesian cows with bloated udders to amble across the A518 on their way to be milked to produce tomorrow's milk for the supermarket shelves. One hundred years ago the Stafford - Uttoxeter road would have been a country lane no different from any of the lanes which now run off the A518. But stranger events were taking place at Lower Loxley Farm one hundred years ago.



Lower Loxley Farm, scene of strange goings on
a century ago.

Photo courtesy of Richard Statham.

ALL HALLOWS is the night of ghosts and ghouls, and a century ago a Uttoxeter farmhouse was the centre of paranormal activity.

The farmhouse is now known as Lower Loxley Farm and is home to George Brookes.

He can vouch that there are no longer any restless spirits in his sitting room or poltergeists in his milking parlour.

But a century ago the house was the centre of a series of unexplained events that were "strange but true."

Unusually the police were called in to investigate and the finger of suspicion pointed towards the 13 year old maid - but the reason for the strange happenings was never properly explained.

So abnormal were the "happenings" that the tenant of the house, then known as Loxley Hall Farm, asked an investigator of a spiritualist newspaper to investigate.

Mr F Brittain, the Edwardian equivalent of the Ghostbusters was despatched to the farmhouse.

In his account at the time he wrote:

“As I looked at it from the road, there was no necessity to inquire whether it was the scene of strange happenings, for the broken window panes bore unmistakable testimony to that fact.

During a little over three days, from the evening of Thursday, August 18 to the Sunday morning following, some remarkable incidents had taken place, such as had never before been witnessed as inquiries into the history of the farm failing to elicit any stories of past hauntings.

Suddenly and without warning on Thursday almost everything which was movable seemed to be endowed with life.

Tables, clogs and shoes, bottles and jars, knives and forks all started to fly about the house, each article apparently vying with the other as to which could move the fastest.

Post and Times, October 27 1995

by Rosemarie Davies

As neither Mr Wilson, the bailiff who resides at the farm, nor his wife were able to find out how they were thrown or who threw them, the police were called in to help solve the mystery and although things happened while the officer was present, he gained no real evidence as to the cause.

True, a 'confession' was obtained from the little maid, of which I shall have something to say later on, but no-one saw or caught the girl in the act of performing the wonderful feats with which she has been credited.

The 'happenings' commenced at the time when the little maid commenced her duties at the farm but strange to say although she had previously spent her holidays there, nothing took place then.

The first incident the girl noticed was that as she came downstairs it seemed as though someone with a heavy tread was following her down, yet upon looking back there was no one to be seen.

Later, as she was cleaning the stairs, some clogs were flung down, and one of them hit her on the forehead, bruising it.

From this time onwards until she left the farm on Sunday, August 21, there was no cessation of the uncanny incidents.

While the family were at breakfast on the Friday morning all the knives and forks on the table took a sudden leap

across the room, through the door, and dropped on the passage floor.

One of the knives hit the moulding over the door and stuck there.

During Friday morning it seemed as though there was someone at the top of the stairs flinging all the pots and bottles he could find down the stairs. Mr Wilson keeps all the empty bottles and jars which have held cattle medicines stored upstairs; these were almost all thrown down.

After the first night Mr and Mrs Wilson had the girl sleeping in their room, but still the noises continued.

Upon one of the occasions when there were some heavy knockings in another room, Mr Wilson rushed out of the bedroom to search, leaving Mrs Wilson and the girl behind, when suddenly a bamboo table in the room was flung after him and crashed down the stairs.

On the Saturday morning, as the girl was putting Mrs Wilson's child's boots on, they were snatched from her hand and flung in the passage. Also on Saturday morning, as Mrs Wilson and the girl were going down the cellar, they were assailed with bottles and jars.

On another occasion as they were together in the kitchen the rolling pin, which was hanging on the wall, flew across the room just missing Mrs Wilson's head. It seemed, also, as though someone was hammering on the ceiling.

Upstairs the beds were unmade and the clothes scattered about the rooms and tables turned over. Stones were thrown, and over 30 panes of glass were broken, including some on the third storey. I questioned Mr and Mrs Wilson closely regarding

these incidents. They are both keen and shrewd and not likely to allow anything to escape their notice.

But they could not detect this young girl throwing things about. Mrs Wilson informed me that all sat at the table having breakfast including the girl, when the knives and forks disappeared and dropped in the passage, but neither she nor her husband saw the girl lift a hand.

Also, when the table was flung downstairs, they were both together, yet she saw nothing.

It was the same when they were together down the cellar. Both Mr and Mrs Wilson agree that the knockings happened where the girl could not reach and while they were together knocks were heard first in one room, then in another, and while Mr Wilson rushed from one room to another, shooting here and there but never hitting anyone, or detecting who was making the noise, the girl was with Mrs Wilson.

The only time that Mr Wilson saw anything pointing towards the girl as the root of the stone throwing was on the Saturday morning, when he saw her, while she was sweeping the yard, look round to see if anyone was watching and then pick up a stone and throw it against the wall close to the kitchen window. This was the only suspicious act that she was seen to do, and it was one which any child might have done.

I asked Mr Wilson if he had noticed anything peculiar about the girl while these manifestations were taking place, and he said that while she was sleeping in their room he watched her when the knocks were being made and saw her raise her head slightly; she then began to breathe very heavily, also made a few peculiar noises in her throat.

Mrs Wilson informed me that she had noticed that now and then the girl breathed heavily and made strange noises.

Afterwards I interviewed the girl at her home. She is nearly 14 years of age, not tall and slightly built. It seems impossible that she could have had the strength to do what happened on the farm.

In fact, it is doubtful whether she could throw a stone with sufficient force to break the top storey windows.

Her account of the happenings corresponded with those given by the Wilsons.

In answer to my questions to how she felt during her stay at the farm, she said that at times she trembled all over inwardly, and felt stupid, and could not remember clearly all that was going on.

Occasionally she felt as though a bandage was wrapped tightly round her head, so tight at times that it hurt her. Once in the night she felt peculiar feelings all over her body and then fainted.

I asked her how it was that she had confessed to doing these things.

Tears came into her eyes as she answered: 'A policeman told me that he would take me straight to prison if I did not say I had done them.'

As soon as the fear of prison was removed, I found that she did not own to having done the alleged tricks, and, as far as I can learn, she is ordinarily a truthful girl."

OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES

Having passed Lower Loxley Farm the A518 now ascends at a steady pace. About half way up can be seen on the right hand side a dirt track leading to the old war-time RAF storage sheds where powder for making bombs were stored. Ted Bebbington told us earlier about the sheds in his story. The dirt track used to cross the old Stafford - Uttoxeter railway line. A few years ago the old cutting between here and Aldery Bank Tunnel was filled in. There were plans to use the fields here for land-fill. Fortunately local pressure groups put paid to that and another proposed land-fill at Chartley.

The road continues to rise and as we approach Aldery Bank sometimes when the sun casts long shadows at dawn or dusk you can clearly see the outlines of medieval ploughlines on the left hand side. The long deep furrows and high redges can also be seen after a snow fall or heavy frost.

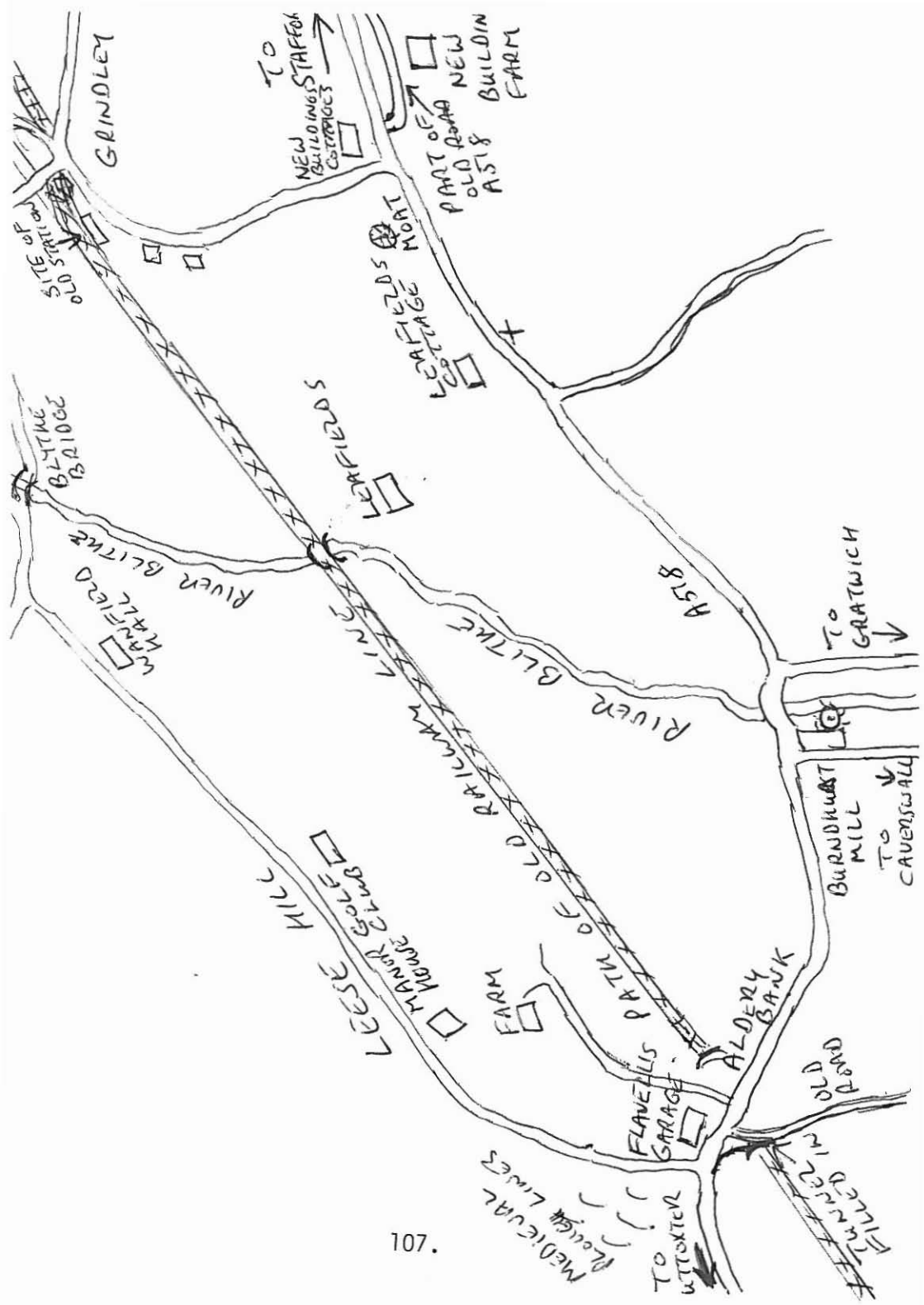
As we near the top of the hill Kingstone Lane on the left hand side takes us to Leese Hill and the hamlet of Blythe Bridge. We'll side track here to Manor Golf Club to hear Tina Brown's story.

R.I.P.

On Thursday, 23 July 1992 a 68 year old bus driver was killed when a lorry jack-knifed at roadworks near Loxley. The roadworks were being carried out to improve the road.

On Monday, 30 July 1990 a 29 year old motor cyclist was killed in a collision with a car near Tunnel Bank.

On Thursday, 2 February 1984 a 17 year old male cyclist was killed in collision with a lorry near Tunnel Bank.



DIVERSION TO LEESE HILL

TINA BROWN'S STORY

Manor Farm and Golf Club, Leese Hill,
tunnel to Wanfield Hall, Mr. Pike of Kingstone
School, panoramic view of the A518 and convoys of
coaches going to Alton Towers,
Mary Queen of Scots' connection with Leese Hill.

My name is Tina Brown (nee Batthew). I live in a flat at Manor Farm, Leese Hill, Kingstone. Manor Farm House and Golf Club overlook the Stafford - Uttoxeter road in the valley below. The River Blythe winds its way along the valley and under the old Stafford - Uttoxeter railway line on its way to Blithfield reservoir and onto the River Trent.

Manor Farm is said to be very old. When it was being surveyed as a listed building the surveyor's opinion was that monks might have lived in it. There are quite a few yew trees and in the middle ages yew trees were only planted close to churches or monasteries. There is said to be a tunnel connecting Manor Farm with Wanfield Hall a mile away.

The old oak beams at Manor Farm are said to have come from an old galleon. When a ship became too old it was de-commissioned and the wood from it returned to the estate or forest from which it had come originally to build the ship. The old wood was then used to build or repair houses and bridges. It was a good example of early day conservation as wood was a very precious raw material and chopping down a tree could lead to the death penalty.

I went to school at Kingston where my teacher was Mr. Pike who in his history lessons told us about an old Roman road in the area. There is an old road going down from Manor Farm towards the river. It is now only a footpath.

My great grandfather William Vernon Batthew lived at Wanfield Hall. He married Lucretia Lawrence of Manor Farm. It was a condition of the marriage that all the children of the union had to be called Lawrence-Batthew.

The Batthews it seems can be traced back to the time of William the Conqueror. They were of either French or Belgian origin. We have an old family bible with our family tree going back generations.

In 1962 the Batthews sold Wanfield Hall to a Mr. Mellor for £8,000.

Manor House Golf Club was founded in 1991. The Club house overlooks the greens and has a panoramic view of the Stafford - Uttoxeter road. In the summer months convoys of coaches can be seen making their way to Alton Towers and returning in the evening. They come from as far away as Cornwall and Bristol.

Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned not far away at Chartley Hall and could well have travelled along the road from her prison at Tutbury Castle. Her gaoler for most of the nineteen years of her imprisonment was the Earl of Shrewsbury. By coincidence his descendant the present Lord Shrewsbury now lives at Wanfield Hall, our old family home.

All our family are involved with Manor Farm Golf Club - my mother Ruby Lawrence Batthew, my sisters Sarah Foulds, Jane Lawrence Batthew and my brother Richard Lawrence Batthew.

In July 1995 my husband David was tragically killed in a motor-cycling accident while on a business trip to Derbyshire. I have two children Helen and Mark who attended Kingstone School. Helen is at Leicester University and Mark is at Alleynes High School, Uttoxeter.

GHOST AT MANOR FARM

Tina Brown's sister Sarah Foulds told me this story.

Sarah Foulds who lived in the top flat at Manor Farm told me of some strange experiences she had while living there. On one occasion she had placed a pile of clothes on a chair when suddenly in front of her eyes the pile of clothes depressed as if someone or something was sitting on the clothes.

A friend of Sarah's named Maureen who stayed at the flat was certain someone had walked through her room during the night. Sarah herself sometimes heard footsteps in the flat during the night and often a door that had been left open would be firmly closed in the morning.

Sarah reassured me that she had never been frightened while living in the flat. In fact, she told me it was very peaceful there. Her mother Ruby Batthew now lives in the flat.

WANFIELD HALL

Wanfield Hall, Leese Hill, belonged to Sir Walter Chetwynd. His son Alexander Chetwynd lived here in 1660. The hall was bought by Rowland Manlove using the wealth he had accumulated in the naval service under Sir Walter Leveson. In 1725 Rebecca Manlove married Dr. Wilkes who had built up an extensive collection of material and books for a history of Staffordshire. Eventually Wanfield Hall became the property of the Lawrence family.

At the time of the undated newspaper article Wanfield Hall was being used as a boarding school. It is now the home of Lord Shrewsbury.

From an old newspaper cutting courtesy Mrs. Nola Whittaker of Loxley.

New deputy lieutenant

Post and Times, October 7 1994



THE EARL of Shrewsbury is one of five newly appointed deputy lieutenants of Staffordshire.

The Earl, who lives at Wanfield Hall, Kingstone, will assist the county's Lord Lieutenant, Mr James Hawley, in carrying out his duties.

Educated at Harrow School, the Rt Hon. Charles Henry John Benedict Crofton Chetwynd Chetwynd-Talbot succeeded his father to become the 22nd Earl

of Shrewsbury in 1980 and took his seat in the House of Lords the following year.

Lord Shrewsbury started out on a farming career, but then proceeded into business becoming director and deputy chairman of the Britannia Building Society and president of the Building Societies Association in 1992.

Chancellor of Wolverhampton University, Lord Shrewsbury is also patron of St Giles' Hospice in Lichfield.

He is an active fundraiser with other colleagues in the House of Lords for the Cancer Relief Macmillan Fund, being Captain of the House of Lords Tug of War Team.

The other new assistants are Burton magistrate Mrs Ursula Davies, Lichfield chartered surveyor Mr Richard Dyott, former Bass Brewery director Robin Manners and Lord Stafford, who runs the 8,000 acre family estate at Swynnerton.



The arms of the Earl of Shrewsbury, England's premier Earl.

KINGSTONE'S PAST RESIDENTS

RECALLED BY MRS. E.
GALLIMORE

Mrs. E. Gallimore, sen., of "Sunset Cottage," Willstock, Uttoxeter, writes: "... After reading the poem on old Uttoxeter residents, I wondered if you would like to publish an account of old Kingstone people. ... I include an account as I knew the village in the first years of my life. ..."

The account reads as follows:—

After reading the poem of Uttoxeter townfolk of years ago, I was especially interested, as I knew the characters mentioned, and sold butter in Uttoxeter Market at 1s. per lb. and eggs at 1s. per score to some of them.

I would like to send this account of the old residents of the little village of Kingstone, where I spent all my childhood days at the Church Farm.

First and foremost, Mr. Richard Taylor, our dear Schoolmaster from 1886 to 1923. In addition to teaching he took woodwork classes, taught music, and was organist of the village church. His wife taught infants and took sewing lessons. It was a Church of England School.

Next, Mr. John Stonier, of Kingstone Hall, farmer, manager of the school, and organiser of the now extinct "Friendly Society." His daughter, Miss Mabel Stonier, also a pupil teacher of the day and Sunday School teacher, beloved by everyone.

Grandpa and Grandma Wilson, of the old thatched Mount Pleasant Farm, later occupied by Mr. William Sargeant, butcher.

Mr. William Sherratt (tailor); his wife the good village nurse (especially maternity cases).

Mr. William Bathew and Sons, of Wanfield Hall, a farmer and cattle dealer on quite a large scale, who would drive as many as 100 catt. by road to the May and November fair at Uttoxeter.

Mr. Charles Beard, woodman for the Earl of Shrewsbury in the village woods, also a carrier by horse and trap on market days.

Mr. Thomas Green, of the Shrewsbury Arms. Beer then was 2d. per pint and one could buy clay pipes cheap for blowing bubbles, which the village children were very fond of doing.

Mr. Thomas Fernyhough, living in a picturesque thatched cottage near the Mosses Farm, whose son was the village paperhanger, painter and general handyman, although he had only one leg.

Messrs. John and Joseph Campion, cobblers, made good boots and also repaired them.

John and Jemima Fradley, of the Church Cottage, church caretaker, a worthy couple.

Mr. Samuel Jackson, of Blythe Bridge Mill, dealer in flour and all kinds of cattle food.

Mr. Thomas Wood, Blythe Bridgebank, bellringer and organ blower of the church for over 50 years.

The Village Postmaster, Mr. Arthur Fearn, of The Birches Farm, who took letters round on his pony's back.

The Vicar, Rev. W. D. Hathaway, met a tragic death in Leese Hill-lane one cold November night on his way home to Gratwich. Frozen to the ground in 1898.

Mr. Thomas Brandrick, of Blythe Bridge, wheelwright, coffin maker and undertaker.

Our M.P., Major Ratcliffe, of Newton Park, Burton-on-Trent, who, during the Boer War, got the "Burton Mail" sent to the village at 4d. per copy. Several young men of the village who were in the Staffordshire Yeomanry volunteered for South Africa. Their names were Mr. Vernon Bathew, Wanfield Hall; Mr. William Clowes, of Leese Hill Farm; and Mr. Ernest Brown, of Grindley. All returned to the village safely, and were given a great reception on return.

At that time we had a policeman—Mr. William Steele. Now we haven't one.

There were also two blacksmiths—Mr. William Wilson, at Blythe Bridge Smithy, and Mr. John Martin, of the Smithy, Loxley Green, where we could get a lot of necessary repairs done. Now with changed times and plenty of cars for transport all these craftsmen are extinct.

OLD ROADS

Local people often talk about old roads but unless you know the area these roads can be difficult to find as over the years - in some cases over the centuries - the roads which originally were lanes have become overgrown and even ploughed up.

Jim Cane, whose hobby is metal detecting, told me about such an old lane running through Newton. He believes it was an old road connecting Tutbury with Chartley. Mrs. Phyllis Massey who lives near the road told me that the road came down through Newton Gorse on to Booth Lane through Blythe Bridge to Newton. Mrs. Massey told me that older residents of the area believed this was the road travelled by Mary Queen of Scots on her final journey from Chartley through Abbots Bromley to Fotheringhay.

Despite the help of the County Highways Department I was unable to identify the Ancient Road mentioned in the newspaper cutting below. Can you help? Do you know of any old roads? It would make an interesting study.

ROAD AT KINGSTONE IS AN ANCIENT HIGHWAY

SO COUNTY COUNCIL TAKES IT OVER

Staffordshire County Council is to accept responsibility for a former non-county road at Blackpits, Kingstone, as it has been proved to be an ancient highway.

This was agreed by the County Roads and Bridges Committee last Thursday on the recommendation of the Uttoxeter Area Advisory Committee.

A report by the Surveyor stated that Mr. N. B. Capewell had drawn attention to the poor condition and recent obstruction to the road at Blackpits. It was suggested that the non-county road, along which there was a pedestrian right-of-way, might be an ancient

highway, in which case the responsibility for its maintenance lay with the County Council.

On the Advisory Committee's suggestion, an investigation as to the status of the road had been carried out.

It had been found that the road was

shown on the following maps: Greenwood of 1820; two inch to one mile Ordnance Survey, 1818-1820; Teasdale of 1822; first edition of one inch to one mile Ordnance Survey, published 1836.

On the basis of this evidence the road was an ancient highway and the Clerk of the County Council had agreed with this view.

It was therefore agreed that the road should be accepted as a maintainable highway for a length of some 260 metres from its junction with Blythe Bridge Bank Road (C.298) to its junction with Petts-lane (D.62).

OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES

ERNEST JOHNSON'S STORY

Uncle Silas, lengthsman and his
three-wheeler bike;
Grindley Station and Burndhurst Mill;
plate layer on the Clog and Knocker;
flood at the Hockley Crossing; Gren Bus stopped
by snow at Weston Bank;
my wife Gwen, 31 years delivering post in Leigh;
fatal accident at Dagdale on railway

My name is Ernest Johnson. I was born on 11 March 1926 at Kingstone where I was reared by my Johnson grandparents. My grandfather worked down the pits at Cannock.

My grandma and I used to walk to Grindley Station where we'd catch the train to Stowe by Chartley where my aunt Sarah Briscoe lived. I can remember my uncle Silas Briscoe had a three-wheeler bike. He worked as a lengthsman on all the roads round Hixon and Stowe. He had a hand-cart for his tools and to cart away any cuttings, dead wood, rubbish or silt he had collected while clearing the verges or cleaning the drains. He later moved to Hixon where he maintained the Churchyard there.

I went to Kingstone School until I was eleven. My teacher there was Miss Reddington and the Headmistress was Mrs. Beech. From there I went to the Heath School until I was fourteen and left to start work.

My first job was with Aitkenheads on their farm at Gratwich. I used to cart beet pulp by tractor and trailer from Grindley Station to the farm. Mick Whittaker from Stowe by Chartley was the signalman there. I worked for Aitkenheads for seven years.

I then left and went to work for Capewells at Bank Top Farm, Gratwich. I also used to take corn from the farm at Gratwich to Beardmore & Bebbington, Burndhurst Mill to be "grun", or ground. Frank Nonelly kept the mill before the Bebbingtons. Frank had one son Sam who now runs the garage at Leigh. He has two daughters, Hazel and Nancy and two sons who live at Marston Montgomery.

I went on to work for the Batthews at the Manor Farm, Leese Hill, Kingstone. I stayed there for four years.

I started work as a plate layer at Bramshall - or Bromshall - on the Stafford-Uttoxeter Railway - the old Clog and Knocker. Our gang had a five mile length of track to maintain. I worked alongside Greg Smith of Uttoxeter, Dick Plant from Whittington, Leigh and Fred Heath whose son now runs Strawberry Farm, Bramshall. We were based near Loxley Lane Crossing, not far from the junction for Stafford and Stoke.

Later I was employed by Uttoxeter Rural District Council and used to work on the roads. I remember a very bad flood by the Hockley crossing when both the railway line and the Stafford road were flooded for some distance with water from the Hockley Brook.

The Green Bus Company had a daily one-hour bus service between Uttoxeter and Stafford, including Saturdays and Sundays. The 11 o'clock was the last bus from Stafford on a Saturday night.

When I worked on the farm at Gratwich on a Saturday night I would catch the bus near Burndhurst Mill and go for a few drinks in Stafford. I remember one particular Saturday it had snowed heavily. When the bus for Stafford arrived I asked the driver if he could make it to Stafford. "We'll do our best", was his reply. We got to Stafford and went to the pub. When it was time to go home we waited half an hour for the bus and decided to start walking home - a journey of about twelve miles.

Half way down Weston Bank there was the bus stuck in the snow. Between us we managed to turn it round and so we got back to Burndhurst Mill without having to walk all the way in the snow.

I met the girl who was to become my wife - Gwendoline Mitchell - at a dance at Leigh. We were married in 1952 at All Saints Church, Leigh. For thirty one years my wife was a post woman in the Leigh area. She used to do sixteen miles a day on her bike delivering mail round the villages. I clocked the mileage one day in my car.

At the time when Time and Motion Studies were the in-thing to try and get more work out of people the G.P.O. at Stoke sent a man to check on my wife's time for delivering the mail round the villages. She really biked his legs off and we never heard anything more about time and motion! The round could be very difficult when the weather was bad but normally my wife did it as regular as clockwork.

The steam engines stopped running on the main Derby-Crewe Line in 1967. The Uttoxeter-Stafford Line closed long before then.

I can remember a very bad accident on the Derby-Crewe Line at Dagdale, near Bramshall in the 1960's. A tractor crossing the railway line from one field to another in fog was hit by a train and a farmer and his young daughter were killed.

There is a very old grassy lane in Gratwich by Bank Top Farm. It could be more than 400 years old.

I retired in 1990 and live in Leigh with my wife Gwen. We have one son Ivan John, a daughter Yvonne and two grand-children Ben and Philip.



Loxley Hall seen from the switch-back
bend on Aldery Bank near Flavell's Garage.

OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES

We return to the A518 by Aldery Bank near Aldery Bank Filling Station. Almost opposite the road from Kingstone is an overgrown lane. On old maps it is shown as a road to nearby Caverswall. There have been a number of road accidents on the A518 near here because of the switch-back type bend in the road.

R.I.P.

On Saturday, 21 November 1987 a 61 year old male pedestrian was knocked down and killed by a car near Aldery Bank.

Mrs. Flavell, who with her husband runs Aldery Bank Filling Station, lives in the cottage next door to the garage. She informed me that their house was once a pub called the Bowling Green Public House. Mrs. Flavell also told me about a book she had read on the Stafford - Uttoxeter railway line which stated that the inglenook and chimney had to be removed from the cottage when the tunnel for the railway was built under the Stafford road. The book also revealed that the workmen had discovered a cellar in the cottage which up to then no-one had known about. It would be interesting to find out more about this little book which it appears came from Burton Library.

Later in this book we will hear about the Bond family who lived at the Bowling Green Public House. In the very hot summer of 1995 I ventured down to the Stafford end of the Aldery Bank tunnel. The sides and bottom of the steep cutting are heavily overgrown with mature trees and shrubs. I was surprised to see that even after weeks of drought the old track near the tunnel was boggy and that there was water inside the tunnel. As I said earlier, the Uttoxeter end of the tunnel has been filled in. It seems that until recently the walls of the tunnel were inspected once a year by engineers from British Rail.

We now come to a notorious accident spot - Burndhurst Bridge - on the River Blythe. The bridge which was probably built around 1775 is on a bad bend in this narrow road and drivers tend to drive too fast. I don't know how many times I've seen the bridge being repaired as a result of vehicles crashing into it. There is talk of a by-pass being built on the fields to the left of the A518 with a new wider bridge. Before we take a look at Burndhurst Mill let's find out about the River Blythe.



The River Blithe at Burndhurst, Spring 1994

THE RIVER BLITHE OR BLYTHE

The River Blithe or Blythe rises at Cellarhead about thirteen miles away from Burndhurst Mill. Six miles away to the North West of Cellarhead as the crow flies is the source of the River Trent. Twenty two miles further South from Cellarhead the Blythe joins the Trent as a tributary. It is difficult to get an exact location for the source of the tiny Blythe as there are a number of streams in the fields at the back of Cellarhead. Local people told me that at times these streams dry up during periods of prolonged drought. At its highest point the Blythe is about 900 ft. (280m) above sea level.

The Ordnance Survey Map of 1974 shows the Blythe starting near Windycote not far from Moorville Hall on the A521. It is joined by a number of little streams. In Weston Coyney a pub called 'The Blithe Spirit' indicates the river's closeness. It flows on past Caverswell Castle until recently a convent and during the civil war was a parliamentary stronghold.

As the Blythe approaches the village of Blythe Bridge it passes under the Crewe - Derby railway line then under the main road and back under the railway line which itself has crossed the main road at the level crossing. At some point here the Romans would have forded the small River Blythe on their way to Chester. A Roman road ran through here from Rocester, a Roman Stronghold, to Chesterton near Newcastle, to Middlewich, a salt producing town and to the Roman fort at Chester which at that time was on the seaboard.

The river passes through Blythe Marsh which as the name implies would have been low marshland. Did the Romans drain it? For a number of miles the river runs alongside the railway line past Cresswell, Upper Leigh and Lower Leigh where soon after it crosses under the railway line towards Dods Leigh and away from Church Leigh. At this stage the Blythe is a

sizable river as it meanders through the hamlets of Field and Gratwich where we are told there were once six sluices to irrigate the King's Field.

It was common practice to flood the meadows in winter. It stopped the ground freezing and gave the grass a head start in spring when the meadows were drained. The silt from the river waters improved the soil of these water meadows.

The Blythe once provided power through an undershot wheel at Burndhurst Mill. Yates Map of Staffordshire of 1775 show Mills on the Blythe at Field, Blythe Bridge, Blithfield and Hamstall Ridware as well as at Burndhurst.

Burndhurst Mill used to flood quite regularly in winter as did the surrounding fields. The Blythe passes under the A518 at Burndhurst Bridge. After it passes under the A518 the Blythe flows on aimlessly and leisurely. It is very attractive as it flows between Leafields Farm, Grindley and Manor Golf Club on Leese Hill - first flowing one way and then another - taking its time - with a little wooden footbridge allowing you to cross it.

Soon afterwards the Blythe creeps under a bridge which once carried the old Stafford - Uttoxeter railway line and then noses into the small hamlet of Blythe Bridge - two places with the same name couldn't be more different. Here again the Blythe meanders from one side to the other with signs asserting 'Private Fishing'. The Blythe is joined by the trickle of Story Brook which flows from Chartley Park passing under the A518 and close to Chartley Moss. Soon the river loses itself in the large Blithfield Reservoir - dammed waters of the River Blythe. The reservoir covers the old valley of the Blythe. I wonder what happened to Blithfield Mill or if anyone has a photograph of the old mill or the lodge which once stood in the valley.

Two miles after it enters the Blythe leaves the reservoir through the dam built in 1952 and then divides into two - parallel rivers - the Little Blythe to the North. The rivers re-unite after one and a half miles, the Little Blythe having gained the waters of the Ash Brook from the area of Bagot's Park. The Blythe then flows on to Hamstall Ridware and is joined by the Par Brook near Hamstall Hall. A mile or so later the River Blythe reaches its end, twenty two-odd miles from its source as it empties into a branch of the River Trent at King's Bromley.

The Trent goes on through Burton, Swarkestone, Nottingham, Newark and eventually flows into the River Humber in Lincolnshire. River Humber flows into the North Sea between Cleethorpes and Spurn Head. A relatively short distance away across the North Sea is the land of Scandanavia, the ancient home of the Vikings. Tradition has it that the Vikings in their long ships sailed up the River Trent from the River Humber to ransack and terrorise the Anglo-Saxon villages and monasteries. They may even have attempted to come up the River Blythe once they had run out of monasteries and churches to plunder.

It must be remembered that the Vikings used shallow-draughted vessels which could sail up smaller rivers where normal vessels would run aground. Eventually half of England, basically that part north of the A5, - the old Roman Watling Street which once linked London with Chester - was under control of the Danish invaders. The Anglo-Saxons or English south of that line had to pay a tax to the Danes called "danegeld" as a ransom to prevent them also invading the South of England.

In the next few pages we'll look at the various families who lived and worked at Burndhurst Mill.



An old photograph of Burndhurst Mill
showing the wheel house with the
water wheel enclosed.

Photo courtesy of John Fisher.

THE FISHERS OF BURNDHURST MILL

Back to the 14th Century -
the Fysshers of Shuttborowe - the destruction
of the old village of Shugborough -
Wilmot Martin's father -
'Bowling Green' Public House, Loxley -
family tragedies - end of 55 years of Fishers at
Burndhurst - trapped in the sluice gate at
Blythe Bridge Mill - the local molecatcher -
sleeping with the rats - 'granny-reared', the best
drawer at Kingstone School - the Green Bus Company

My name is John Fisher. I live in Rugeley where I was born. My father Joseph (Joe) Fisher often told me that the Fishers had some connection with milling in the Uttoxeter area. When my father died in 1976 and I began to research the family tree I soon realised how little I really knew about my ancestors, the Fishers.

With the help of my uncle, Sidney Fisher - my father's brother, and many visits to the William Salt Library and the County Record Office in Stafford I was able eventually to trace the Fishers back to the 14th Century.

Variations of the name Fisher existed at Bishton, Wolseley and the Haywoods. A tax record of 1332 revealed a "Joh'ne le Fyssher" residing at Bishton.

From the name I assumed that my ancestors made their living from fishing and the fact that they lived in close proximity to the rivers Trent, Dove and Blythe would seem to support this theory.

On a visit to the County Record Office and an inspection of the Hearth Tax Returns - these record the number of hearths in a house for tax purposes - I found that a John Fisher was taxed on one hearth at Shuttborowe" - a village where Shugborough is today.

The same returns also showed a William Anson, Esquire of Shuttborowe with nine taxable hearths having previously recorded eleven hearths - by mistake!

A local magistrates court document of 1601 granted "John Fisher of Shuttborowe, husbandman" (farmer) a license to keep an Alehouse in the village.

By the year 1733 the Ansons who were lords of the manor of Shugborough had moved out all the inhabitants to alternative properties across the River Sow at Great Haywood and razed the old village to the ground. It was not unusual for landowners to move villages to suit themselves. The original village of Sandon was up on the hill next to the parish church which now stands in beautiful isolation.

My research eventually showed that my great great great great grandfather Thomas was born in Colton in 1749. He married Anne Bevins and resided in Admaston, later moving to Abbots Bromley where Joseph Fisher, my great great great grandfather was baptised on 15 February 1789. In 1810 he married Mary Foster of Uttoxeter. They had four children one of whom George Fisher, born in 1811, was my great great grandfather. In 1861 the Fisher family is recorded as living at the High Street, Uttoxeter.

I discovered that George Fisher married Mary Thompson of Sedgley in 1834. He was a miller and lived on Uttoxeter Heath. There were two mills recorded in Uttoxeter at the time - a windmill on the Heath and Uttoxeter Watermill on the River Tean by the Ashbourne Road, later known as Titley's Mill. George and Mary Fisher had eight children one of whom was my great grandfather Joseph Fisher who was born in 1839. In 1853 he was apprenticed to John Tabbernor the resident water-miller at Gayton Mill, near Weston.

BURNDHURST MILL,

UTTOXETER,

December 31st 1906

~~191~~ ¹⁹⁰⁶ Fisher Gallimore

Bought of Joseph Fisher.

		£	s	d
Nov 1	1 loaf			5
	1 lb butter		1	3
3	1 lb butter		1	3
	1 gallon paraffin			9
	1 penny blacking			1
6	1 lb butter		1	3
12	1 square salt			4 ¹ / ₂
	1 lb butter		1	3
	1 penny blacking 1 yeast			2
15	1 loaf			5
16	2 lb butter		2	6
20	1 lb yeast 1 lb butter		1	4
23	3 stone salt		1	0
	1 lb saltpeter			5
	1 loaf			5
24	1 lb butter		1	3
28	1 lb butter		1	3
Dec 1 st	1 lb butter		1	3
3	1 stone bread		1	8
4	1 lb butter		1	3
8	1 pint vinegar			3
10	2 stone salt			8
	1 ¹ / ₂ butter		1	10 ¹ / ₂
15	2 yeast 2 lb butter		2	9
	<u>1.13.11</u>		<u>4.13.11</u>	

paid Janney &

J. Fisher

After completing his apprenticeship, in 1861, aged 22, Joseph Fisher gained employment at Burndhurst Mill on the River Blythe at Lower Loxley. His employer was William Lawrence. The tenancy changed around 1870 to Henry Sayer who was Joseph's boss until 1882.

During this time my great grandfather had married Harriet Bond, a farmer's daughter from the Loxley area. In 1863 their marriage certificate was witnessed by Joseph's friend Jack Martin from Gratwich. His son Wilmot was to become famous as the "Staffordshire Harry Lauder" who raised over £10,750 for charities by impersonating the Scottish entertainer. Harriet's parents James and Eliza Bond, for a time, kept the Bowling Green public house at Loxley where Harriet was born in 1839.

The Fishers lived at Kingstone with their family until they took over the tenancy of Burndhurst Mill in 1882 after Henry Sayers' departure.

While Joseph worked the mill Harriet baked bread to sell at Uttoxeter Market where she and her husband were regular visitors. A newspaper article of the time tells us that their old piebald pony which pulled their trap was almost as familiar at the Market as the couple themselves.

I have copies of invoices from my great grandfather to Thomas Gallimore who farmed at nearby Caverswall Farm. They make interesting reading and show what an important service the miller provided for the local farming community.

There were nine children from the marriage - six sons and three daughters.



This unique family photograph of the Fisher family before the turn of the century portrays Joseph and Harriet Fisher and some of their family.

Fitting names to faces is partly guesswork but from left to right these people could be :

Frederick, Harriet (jnr), James, Joseph, youngest daughter, Allan Charles, Harriet, and Thomas Bull, (Harriet's husband).

Both Albert Joseph and William the two eldest sons were dead by this time and Mary Alice, together with Ernest Thomas are absent.

There were tragedies in the family. The eldest son William was accidentally shot and killed while hunting rats. He was 23. Their next eldest son Allan Charles Fisher took over Burndhurst Mill when his parents retired. Tragically he died in 1919 of pneumonia, aged 47. His death could well have been brought on by the cold damp conditions at the Mill. He is buried at Gratwich Churchyard a few miles from Burndhurst Mill. His wife Esther and daughter moved to Great Haywood. Charles Fisher's death ended the Fisher's 55 year connection with Burndhurst Mill.

In 1906 my great grandfather Joseph and my grandmother Harriet left Burndhurst Mill and went to live at Leafields Cottage, further along the road to Stafford near Grindley.

In September 1913 Joseph and Harriet celebrated their golden wedding. A local newspaper had a photograph of them outside the front door of Leafields Cottage alongside an article about their lives together. Sadly, two months later, Joseph died on 29 November 1913 aged 74. Harriet lived on for another five years and died in December 1918.

NEWS

THE SENTINEL, Monday, May 19, 1997

Biker badly hurt in bridge smash

A MOTORCYCLIST sustained serious abdominal injuries after a three vehicle collision on a narrow bridge.

Christopher Thomas Owen, 26, of Castle View Estate, Derrington, near Stafford, was airlifted to hospital after the collision yesterday morning.

His condition at the North Staffordshire Hospital Centre was today described as 'comfortable.'

Mr Owen's Yamaha 600 motorbike

was involved in a collision with two cars at Burnhurst Mill Bridge on the A518 between Stafford and Uttoxeter at Lower Loxley.

Nissan Micra driver Kris Foster, 22, of North Shields, sustained a slight knee injury and shock and was released from hospital after treatment.

Passenger Clive Flanagan, 34, of Holly Road, Uttoxeter, was unhurt.

The second car failed to stop at the scene following the accident at 9.20am.



MR. AND MRS. FISHER.

The good wishes of their many friends and acquaintances will be extended to Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Fisher, of Leaffields Cottage, Grindley, who on Wednesday attained their golden wedding. The happy old couple were married at the Uttoxeter Parish Church on September 24th, 1863, the Rev. Abud, the then vicar, conducting the ceremony, and they have spent the whole of their married life within a few miles of the place where they are at present residing. In the past they were familiar figures at the Uttoxeter market, and were generally well-known and thoroughly respected. They were in the habit of driving to the town every Wednesday, and their old piebald pony was almost as familiar to the market folk as the old couple themselves.

Born at Uttoxeter in 1839, Mr. Fisher was apprenticed to Gayton Mill. In the year 1851 he took over Burnchurst Mill which he tenanted for over half a century, only retiring some few years since owing to failing health, and the inexorable demands of old age. Mr. Fisher is 74 years of age, and his life's partner is a year younger. Both enjoy excellent health, and are in full possession of all their faculties.

Mr. Fisher had a severe illness in the spring of this year, but he has quite recovered, and is daily to be seen in his garden in which he takes the greatest interest and pleasure. On his relinquishing active work at the mill, his eldest son took over the business.

Loxley, near Uttoxeter, was the birthplace of Mrs. Fisher, and her present residence is within one mile of the place of her birth. Her father and mother were tenants of a public-house at the Bowling Green, Loxley, at the time the Great Northern Railway line was laid to Stafford. At one time, Mrs. Fisher was noted for her home-made bread of which she used to sell a very large quantity every week.

There have been nine children of the marriage, six sons and three daughters, and seven are living, the eldest son having been accidentally shot at the age of 24, while another son died after an illness. The remaining son and daughters are all married, and there are 29 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren.

Mr. and Mrs. Fisher marked the happy event of their lives with some little festivities. We join in wishing them good health and happiness.

After Allan Charles Fisher died I believe a man named Fradley took over the tenancy of Burndhurst Mill. My grandfather's son Ernest Fisher worked for him from 1916 to 1918 delivering coal.

By Christmas 1926 a Mr. Nonelly was working the Mill. He was followed in 1939 by Roland Bebbington. The last milling job was done in 1946. The Bebbingtons stayed at Burndhurst Mill until 1979 when the property was sold to Jesse and Delia Brough from Milford, Stafford, who are the present owners. The Broughs have converted part of the Mill into residential accommodation.

My grandfather Ernest Thomas Fisher was the youngest of Joseph and Harriet's children. He was born in 1879.

Ernest met and courted a local girl Annie Gorse, daughter of Joseph Gorse, a gamekeeper who lived at Leese Hill. They married at Kingstone Church in 1901. My grandparents had seven children.

At the time of his marriage on 4 March 1901, Ernest Fisher was living at 2, Shaw's Yard, Carter Street, Uttoxeter. His first child Ernest William was baptised at Gratwich Church, with Uttoxeter given as his parents' address, so it seems likely that they were still at Shaw's Yard in late 1901. The birth of Albert Joseph, my father, in 1903 and Frances May in 1904 were registered at Kingstone and on both occasions 'Old Town, Kingstone' was entered as their parents' abode but as yet no details have been discovered regarding this address.

In August 1906 Harold was born, baptised at Gratwich, where the home address was given as Grindley. By November 1907 when Sidney arrived the Gratwich register records Bowgaze as his parents' address. These two references mean that on both occasions the family were living at a tied cottage at Bowgaze Farm which is near to Grindley. By 1909, when Frederick died (aged 6), the Gratwich register again records Grindley, and Harold has recalled that Fred's death occurred at 'the cottage' in Grindley, now known to be Yew Tree Cottage. The family were certainly living there in 1911 as a postcard from Leigh testifies.

Around 1914 the family moved to Tollgate Cottage on Dove Bridge between Uttoxeter and Doveridge. The cottage was owned by Johnny Cope, a butcher who turned out in a bowler hat and drove a pony and trap. He kept stock in a field behind the cottage and Ernest Thomas kept his eye on these beasts.



A PIG KILLING AT BURNDHURST MILL

Photographed by Samuel Durose of Caverswall, this scene depicting the killing and butchering of two pigs was probably taken about the turn of the century.

Joseph Fisher, his clothing covered in flour, stands second from left holding a jug. The tall young man behind the recumbent pig by the look of his 'whitened' clothing, could well be Allan Charles Fisher, Joseph's eldest surviving son who was later to take over the Mill.

Most of the children attended Doveridge school at this time. Eldest son Ernest was now living with his granny (Harriet) at Leafields Cottage on the Stafford road near Grindley, and Albert Joseph with his grandparents, the Gorses, at Old Town Farm, Kingstone.

In 1916 Ernest Thomas, my grandfather, was working at Wooliscrofts' Corn Mill. My uncle, Sid Fisher, told me his father took him to Wooliscrofts' Mill as a young boy and he remembers him starting up a (gas?) engine to operate the machinery. The view from a top storey window looked out over the "Wakes Ground".

Wooliscrofts' Mill was opposite Uttoxeter Station, off Brookside Road near what became the Unigate Creamery. Although the trade name was Wooliscrofts it belonged to Mr. Vernon and was also known as Vernon's Mill. The Wooliscroft business later moved from this site to the premises in Church Street, Uttoxeter and later became the Old Mill Furnishings.

A Derby Corn Agent, Mr. Duffin, bought the vacant Blythe Bridge Mill on the River Blythe near Kingstone and asked my grandfather to move there and operate the mill. Ernest agreed and the family moved again about 1919.

In July 1916, Eliza Gorse died, leaving Joseph and Albert (Joe) on their own at Old Town Farm. Soon after, Ernest and Annie decided to move to this Kingstone property. Joe by early 1918 had got a job and he lived in at Gallimores farm at Caverswall. When she fell ill, Harriet Fisher was brought from Leafields to Kingstone where she died on the 19 December 1918.

My father, Albert Joseph (Joe) Fisher spent his early years at his parents' home but like Ernest, his brother, he was 'farmed out' to live with his grandparents. Ernest went to live with his grandma Harriet, who was then on her own at Leafields Cottage, near Grindley, whilst my father was sent to his other grandparents, the Gorses at Old Town Farm, Kingstone. He must have spent at least three years at Kingstone school and recalled that his schoolmaster had called him the best 'drawer' in the school when he left. The reason that these two were granny reared was due to the fact that the Dove Bridge property to which the family moved in 1914 was simply too small to accommodate all eight of the Fishers.



Blythe Bridge Mill, Blythe Bridge, near Kingstone.

Photo courtesy John Fisher

My father's first job in early 1918 was on farm service at Gallimore's farm at Caverswall, just up the lane at the side of Burndhurst Mill. Here he lived in at the farm and was paid £5 for the first year and £7 for the second. He was allowed half a day off on Sunday, to be taken between milking times!

Around 1920 my father left Gallimores and went to work for my grandfather, Ernest Fisher at their new home at Blythe Bridge Mill. This water mill was re-built in 1823 by Earl Ferrers of Chartley, and at the side was provided a neat half-timbered house. My father remembered collecting sacks of grain from Grindley Station and riding bareback on the horse which pulled the cart to and from the Mill. He also recalled seeing two steam traction engines ploughing in Chartley Park. They worked one each side of the field, pulling a plough on wire cables back and forth between them by means of special winding drums underneath the engines.

My father decided to seek work elsewhere and moved to Leek. He eventually got a job with Isaac Turner, a coal haulier from Longsdon. He drove a 'Bean' lorry, a make of lorry made in Wolverhampton, and the firm operated from a coal depot near Longsdon.

The Fishers worked Blythe Bridge Mill for about six years. They were certainly there in 1923 when eldest son Ernest married Elsie Bond and the ensuing celebrations were carried out at the mill. A 'chase' was organised whereby the ladies of the group chased after a single cockerell, the prize-winner was she who caught it! Harold recalls driving the Bride and Groom to Grindley Station afterwards in the pony and trap.

The operation of the mill necessitated lifting the sluice gate to allow the water to turn the water-wheel. This was achieved by turning a gear with a spanner.

On one occasion Harold was practising with his violin in a front room of the mill when a passer-by informed him that someone was shouting 'Harold' in a desperate fashion. On investigation he found that his father was trapped by the wrist by the spanner on the sluice gate. Harold released Ernest and cycled to Uttoxeter to alert Dr. Herbert, who returned with him by pony and trap to treat the patient. Afterwards a blacksmith fitted a ratchet mechanism to arrest the falling action of the gate.

Large pike inhabited the stream at the mill and could be caught by means of a rabbit wire (noose) on the end of a bean pole. Two people were involved, the pole bearer gently slipping the noose over the pike helped by instructions from another person viewing from the opposite bank. These predators could also be killed with a shotgun. They were the subject of a 2/6d. reward by local fishermen and their heads were nailed onto a shed as proof of capture.

A local molecatcher, Tom Elsmore, lodged for a while at the mill. The lower part of his arm was missing and it terminated in a hook. He could hang moles on a barbed wire fence and skin them using his one good hand. He made his living by selling these moleskins.

Millstones needed 'dressing' (chiselling out the grooves) at regular intervals. The man for the job was a Mr. Mellor, who came from Uttoxeter to carry out this operation. On occasion he stayed at the mill, sleeping on a straw bed in the loft, where it was said the rats ran over his sleeping body.

Whilst the family occupied the mill, Trevor Harrison (Annie's uncle) had lost his wife. He bought a small property called Thornyhills Farm in Thorny Lane between Marchington and Newborough. He persuaded the Fisher family to move in and run the smallholding with him. In 1925 Ernest and Annie moved from the mill to Thornyhills Farm. Sometime later it became known that Mr. Duffin had committed suicide at his mill at Blythe Bridge.

In 1930 my grandparents moved with Trevor Harrison to Lower Brookhouse Farm at Birch Cross, Marchington.

My grandmother Annie Fisher travelled regularly by bus to Uttoxeter. In early 1941 she got off a bus in Market Square and stepped into the path of an oncoming car which knocked her to the ground. By July of that year Annie was very ill. She was seen by the local G.P., Dr. Herbert, who told her she had cancer and had six weeks to live. After a spell in hospital Annie died at Lower Brookhouse Farm in December 1941. My grandfather Ernest Thomas went to live with his son Sidney at Leigh and then to his other son Harold's house at Balance Hill, Uttoxeter where he died in 1948.

Whilst working at the coal yard my father caught the eye of a young lady who passed by most mornings when there was work at the local silk mills. She proved to be Elsie Machin, the daughter of a pottery workers' Union official, who lived at 3 Bankhall Road, Burslem. Their first date was on the 24 September 1932 at the Theatre in Leek. They continued courting for about four years and were engaged on Christmas Day 1934. Joe left Longsdon to lodge with Elsie's brother Ernest and his wife Grace, moving there on 20 July 1935.

After applying for various jobs my father left Turners and on 1 October 1935 started work for the Co-op Dairy. This occupation was short-lived however and after some time out of work he joined the milk hauliers Ernald Upton of Fradswell on the 21 September 1936. This was another lorry driving job, this time on an International, collecting milk churns from surrounding farms and delivering to Fole Dairy.

Joe Fisher and Elsie Machin were married at St. John's Church, Burslem on the 28 November 1936. The couple moved into rented accommodation with Sidney and Millie, my father's brother, at Lower Leigh.

At this time my father developed a hernia through lifting milk churns and was off work for about thirteen weeks.

My father's mother, Annie Fisher, heard of a job at the Green Bus Company in Uttoxeter. My father had already passed his P.S.V. licence. He applied and was accepted for the job. The proprietor, Charles J. Whieldon lived at Hagley Hall in Rugeley and persuaded my parents to go and live in Rugeley. At this time my father was involved in bus driving, chauffeuring, vehicle maintenance and doing odd jobs for C.J. Whieldon.

After I was born in August 1941 my father continued to work for the Green Bus Service at their Elmore Lane Depot mainly on maintenance. He continued with them until he retired.

I married Doreen Mitchell from Brereton, near Rugeley in 1966.

My mother died from cancer in 1967. We went to live with my father, who died in 1976. We have two sons Martin and Neil. My father's brother Sidney Fisher still lives in Uttoxeter.

During my research I uncovered some interesting information and now know most of the Fisher family history, which is all recorded for posterity and for the benefit of future generations.

OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES

I am grateful to John Walker of Uttoxeter for the following contribution on Burndhurst Mill. The Walker family have been bakers in Uttoxeter for many generations. In 1996 John Walker published a fascinating account of the people he met on his breadround in the villages called Hawkers Galore - Memories of a Uttoxeter Baker.

JOHN WALKER ON BURNDHURST MILL

John Walker of Uttoxeter used to visit Burndhurst Mill on his bread round. In the following pages he gives some of his memories of the people who lived at Burndhurst Mill.

Burndhurst Mill, as your report says, is now being well preserved by the present owners, the Brough family. I knew their predecessors here very well indeed. I think they followed the Fishers here in the early forties, in fact I saw them arrive here at the Mill from a small-holding, Crabtree Farm, Stramshall. They were George Beardmore and his wife Annie and their only daughter Marjorie and her husband Roland Bebbington. They farmed at the Mill as Beardmore and Bebbington.

Before coming to the Mill old George was a roadsman (or lengthsman) in the Stramshall area. Each of these roadmen looked after several miles of lane or road keeping the verges trimmed, ditches all cleaned out and the roadside edges and gutters swept up, all looking nice and tidy with a pride in their finished work. George and Annie were both natives of Denstone. George's father was at The Oak public house and Annie's parents kept Hillside Farm. He was a very gruff and outspoken man but, like his wife, always kind and considerate to other people, especially to those less fortunate than their own poor selves.

Near to them lived a family where the man seldom worked but drank regularly; they had a family of six girls. Annie helped them out constantly with food and clothes. She would cut the linings out of old coats to make frocks for these girls. Their mother died at 34 years old and George and Annie had the eldest girl.

She, Rene, lived with them at the Mill until she married. The others went to relatives.

When old George was dying he kept asking for Annie. She said to me, 'I don't know whether he was asking for me or his first wife - he's been married before and his first wife was Annie' !

After Annie died Roland and Marjorie Bebbington continued to farm at the Mill with Rene and their two sons. The house door was never closed, neighbours, friends and strangers, anyone and everyone called at the Mill. All walked in and sat in the kitchen - home from home!

Roland kept a small herd of Ayrshire cattle. These were so well looked after, like all the other animals on the farm, with plenty of clean bedding straw. He won many first prizes with them at County and other shows. When children called at the Mill all work stopped and they were taken round to see the cows and the calves, lambs, hens and ducks etc. Older children would fish in the river. The neighbouring farm was kept by a bachelor and in his old age Marjorie would walk up and down the lane taking him his meals and looking after him. It would be a mile there and back included.

During World War II a British fighter plane crash-landed in a field of Bebbington's, just over the bridge on the left hand side. Roland managed to get the injured pilot out, thereby saving his life. His actions deserved official recognition and a medal; they got nothing.

The deep mill pool and its waterfall were quite an awesome sight. The Bebbingtons saved several children from this pool. On one occasion a boy of about ten years old fell in. He was a local farmer's son. He was taken under twice by the waterfall. Roland and Marjorie's son David went in the pool and rescued him, despite the fact that David could not swim.

Burndhurst Mill was very prone to flooding, this affecting not only the home but the animals in the sheds and the poultry. The back door entrance had a bricked up step a foot high but even this was not enough to keep the river at bay.

Roland and Marjorie had never had a holiday in their lives and after about forty years at the Mill Roland Bebbington died suddenly. After his death his wife Marjorie found a box of cash which he had been saving to take them on their first holiday when they retired.

The Mill was sold to the Brough family and Marjorie and her two sons went to live at Marston Montgomery.

There is a saying around here that the house martin never builds its nest on the walls of a house where there is dissention and hatred. Every Spring the martins would return to the Mill - not in single spies but in battalions! The nests of these birds were something to be seen. They were built row upon row and in tiers, new nests upon old, until the wall was more reminiscent of the fortifications of Monte Cassino! An ideal place for the martins to hawk their flies from over the river and the dam. It was a joy to see the noisy birds as they flew up and away from their nests, feeding the young ones. The mess they made on the ground below was unbelievable as each bird leaves a dropping as it flies from the nest. To most of us this would have been an intolerable nuisance, but to Roland and Marjorie it was all part of nature and they loved those birds.

I often pass the Mill nowadays and see the place without its animals and their sheds turned into living accommodation. The whole place very nicely 'restored' and garden furniture on the grass in front of the Mill. But I wonder - do the martins still come?

Lots of history up for sale

BURNDHURST MILL, an 18th-century water mill, which was in use until 1945, is to come under the auctioneer's hammer at Uttoxeter next Wednesday.

It stands on the banks of the River Blythe at Loxley, off the A518 Stafford to Uttoxeter trunk road, about three miles from Uttoxeter.

The mill wheel with most of the running gear — including chutes, grindstones, remains of the hydraulic hoist for sacks, and the mill gearing — have remained in place.

The property is listed as a Grade II building by the Department of the Environment as being of historic and architectural interest.

The agents, Bagshaws of Uttoxeter, say im-

provements could be carried out in agreement with the Department.

The mill and adjoining four-bedroomed house and outbuildings form a picturesque group of properties of charm and character — in peaceful surroundings, despite their nearness to the road.

ATTRACTIVE

The house, mill, mill house, attractive front garden with stream — together with two paddocks — total almost eight acres.

The reason for the sale is that the present owner, Mrs Marjorie Bebbington, and her two sons now want to move to a larger farm after living at Burndhurst for 40 years.

Fishing rights are not included in the sale.



THE BROUGHS OF BURNDHURST MILL

WHEN it comes to describing businesswoman Delia Brough, workaholic doesn't even come close.

Human whirlwind is nearer the mark for this enterprising lady, who has run a string of successful business ventures, at the same time as bringing up a family of four children, training as a dental nurse, renovating an historic water mill as a home and pursuing hobbies ranging from keep fit to genealogy.

A member of the successful family team at award-winning Hixon firm Jesse Brough Metals - which is run by her husband Jesse, and sons Jesse Jr, Miles and Ashley - Delia, 55, has done everything from book-keeping to driving lorries - then switched career completely to run a Uttoxeter fitness centre.

Jesse and Delia have been a team to reckon with since they first married nearly 36 years ago.

"Whatever Jesse has been involved in, I have been there too, working alongside him," she said.

"We just seem to complement each other. We are one of the lucky couples that are blissfully married. We are not only man and wife, we are very good friends."

Delia was a dental nurse before her marriage, but the couple's initial joint venture was Brough Coal Merchants, and Delia worked alongside her husband not only doing the administration but also at the wheel of a coal lorry delivering fuel to customers throughout Staffordshire.

Delia also had her own little business - an ice cream van, which she ran for two years.

The coal merchants was sold for another career change when the couple went into catering - creating a 100-seat restaurant at Milford Common, which developed a roaring trade catering for tourists.

Her next adventure came when the family bought a derelict water mill at Lower Loxley. Delia added plastering to her skills as the family renovated the listed building from top to bottom and developed a smallholding with a full range of farm animals, from horses to ducks.

Then came her next challenge, when the family launched Jesse Brough Metals, a foundry and refinery producing aluminium castings and recycling aluminium. The firm has gone on to win a string of business and environmental awards and, again, Delia wasn't just organising the paperwork - she was out and about at the wheel of a lorry collecting waste metal and aluminium dross.

And when husband Jesse suffered a stroke in 1982, she rolled up her sleeves and really got busy - working in the foundry shovelling sand and making castings.

"When you meet bad times you just have to get on with it. There's no dole when you are working for yourself and you can't expect someone else to keep you."

"We have been through some hard times. Every business we have started we have built up from scratch, and it is nice now to see the business growing and developing, and winning awards."

For the last three years Delia has also run Uttoxeter's New Image fitness centre, launched by her son Ashley. And though the business has now been sold, Delia has been kept on as a consultant.

With a bit more time on her hands now, she has completed family trees, through five generations, of her own and her husband's families - no mean task, when she is one of 13 children.

And Delia is now looking around for the next new project to get involved in.

"I'm not the sort to sit around at home with my knitting," she said, "I just have to be busy."

BY ALISON ROBERTS

Staffordshire Newsletter, Friday, June 21, 1996

I have been able to identify the following millers at Burndhurst from the sources listed alongside.

1851 -	James Mills Jun.	White's Directory
1868 - 1880	Jerry Sayer	Post Office Directory
1884 - 1908	Joseph Fisher	Kelly's Directory
1906 - 1919	Allan Charles Fisher - John Fisher	
1919	Mr. Fradley	
	Mr. Riley	
1926 - 1939	Mr. Nonelly - John Fisher and	
		Ted Bebbington
1939 - 1946	Roland Bebbington - John Fisher and	
		Ted Bebbington
1946 - 1979	Bebbingtons lived at Burndhurst but it was no longer used as a mill.	
1979 -	Burndhurst Mill was bought by Jesse and Delia Brough who live there today (1998).	

Staffordshire Newsletter, Friday, December 27, 1996



FAMILY AFFAIR: Delia Brough is pictured (centre) with Ashley, Jesse, Jesse senior and Miles.

Dug Durose told me that local people often refer to Burndhurst Mill as Blunders Mill.

OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES

On crossing Burndhurst Bridge there is a winding lane to the right leading to Gratwich, a small hamlet with a quaint little old church. Gratwich has a mention in William the Conqueror's Domesday Book. After the Norman Conquest Robert of Stafford held Gratwich where there was one virgate of land. A free man by the name of Goding held it before the Normans. Robert of Stafford sub-let it to a man named Wulfhech. There were four villagers, four small-holders and one slave. There were three ploughs with land for three ploughs. There was a mill valued at 4s. Was this the original Burndhurst Mill or was there indeed a mill at Gratwich?

AN ASH tree stands at the spot in North Staffordshire where Dolly Shepherd made a parachute landing in 1908 after carrying out what was claimed to be the world's first mid-air rescue.

With another female parachutist wrapped round her body, the fearless stunt girl dropped 11,000 feet from a gas-filled balloon. The two women hit the ground in a field at Leigh, near Uttoxeter, just missing an upturned scythe.

Awry

Dolly and her companion, a novice named Louie May, had made the balloon ascent from a carnival event at Longton. Their scheduled double parachute jump from 3,000 feet went awry when Louie's release cord failed to work.

The two women, hanging from trapeze bars at the end of limp parachutes, found themselves drifting into the clouds miles from the showground. In a daring operation, Dolly pulled the other girl towards her with a connecting cord and Louie scrambled over and clung to her.

The pair came down at Leigh on one parachute. Dolly being badly injured on landing. However, she was treated by a local doctor



Dolly Shepherd,

and a farming family named Hollins looked after her so well that she resumed parachuting two months later.

For information about this dramatic episode in Edwardian times I am indebted to Dolly Shepherd's daughter, Miss Molly Sedgwick, who published a book about her mother's aerial career in 1984, a year after Dolly died, aged 96.

Parachute

Molly, who lives in Eastbourne, tells me that she tours the country giving illustrated lectures on Dolly's adventures. Molly herself made her first free fall jump at 67 and has done three in all.

Her mother made her first parachute jump in 1904, so this year marks the 90th anniversary. Molly hopes to commemorate it with her own fourth jump at an event in the Midlands.

Incidentally, it was the Hollins family who planted the tree at Dolly's landing spot at Leigh. This became known as Dolly's ash.

All Our Yesterdays

EVENING SENTINEL, Saturday, July 23, 1994

Not far from Gratwich a lady parachutist descended on the Hollins family in 1908. The Hollins family still live in the area.



IRENE NOBLET'S STORY

Father - gamekeeper for Queen Victoria,
explosion at Fauld, rare white cattle of Chartley

My name is Irene Noblet (nee Collis). I was born on 17 June 1919 in a cottage on the Gratwich Estate where my father Frank Collis worked for Mr. Carter. My mother Susan Collis (nee Moore) came from Buttermilk Hill, Newborough where her father Charles Moore worked as a gamekeeper for the Duchy of Lancaster, owned by Queen Victoria. My mother's Mother was Hannah Moore. I was christened at St. John's Church, Stowe-by-Chartley. My grand-parents William and Mary Collis lived at Banktop Farm, Gratwich. Later on we moved to a cottage near them opposite the blacksmith's shop at Gratwich.

Mr. Carter had a big house built on the edge of Chartley Park. I think it is now called Congreve House.

When I was about nine or ten we moved to Scounsell Green, Marchington Woodlands where my father became a bailiff for Mr. Goodwin who kept The Vaults Public House in Uttoxeter.

I went to Kingstone School where my teacher was Miss Smith. When we moved to Marchington Woodlands I went to Bradley Street School in Uttoxeter. I left there after a year or so and worked in a grocery shop in Carter Street, Uttoxeter for about twenty years.

When the Goodwins died in the early 1940's the farm was sold and we moved to Draycott in the Clay. My father got a job at the ammunition dump at Fauld. On 27 November 1944 a massive explosion took place at the dump. Seventy people were killed and many others were injured.

My father was one of those badly injured and was off work for six months. He was very lucky to have survived. He continued to work at Fauld until he retired.

I have a postcard of the rare white cattle of Chartley. My father told me he remembered going with the photographer in 1904 when he was fifteen years old to take photos of the cattle. It was too dangerous to approach the cattle on foot so they drove in a horse and cart to where the cattle were.

I lost my first husband Frank Brown in March 1965. I married Robert Noblet on 15 April 1969 and went to live at Draycott House Farm in Draycott in the Clay. My husband Robert died in September 1990 and a year later I moved to Uttoxeter.

I have one son Eric and one grandson Paul.



OLD ENGLISH WHITE CATTLE
(Chartley Park, Staffs.)

Chartley Cattle
descendants of the ancient Chartley herd
once kept at Chartley Park.

Terrible explosion

THE FAULD DISASTER

SHORTLY before 11.10am on November 27, 1944, a Royal Air Force armoured car picking his way along a dimly-lit tunnel beneath a Staffordshire hillside, turned in alarm as he heard the sound of a small explosion from somewhere in the mass of small caverns he had just left.

Nearly 100 feet above him, the farmworkers at Upper Castle Hayes Farm watched the car in which their employers, Mr and Mrs Goodwin, made their way down the narrow farm track towards the main road at Fauld.

For them it was a perfectly normal Monday morning. It was however to be their last.

For the small explosion that had so alarmed the airman was merely the forerunner to the largest explosion ever in the United Kingdom.

Within seconds all trace of Upper Castle Hayes Farm and its occupants had vanished.

All that remained where once it had stood was a yawning crater 80 feet deep and covering an area of 12 acres.

At 11 minutes past 11 in the morning a total of 70 people lost their lives. Nineteen bodies were never recovered.

IMPACT

The impact of the blast was felt over a wide part of the Midlands and in the vast area surrounding the explosion not a tree or blade of grass remained.

by Rosemarie Davies

It resembled a scene from a First World War battlefield.

Journalist John Reed later wrote: "There was no trace of Upper Castle Hayes Farm and so complete was the change in the landscape that no one could accurately pinpoint the site."

"Three other farms, Hanbury Fields, Hare Holes and Croft had been extensively damaged; a Dutch barn and cattle shed at Stalfords flattened and, throughout the affected area a total of 200 cattle had been killed."

"In Hanbury village, where few buildings had escaped the blast, the Cock Inn and the village hall had been damaged beyond repair and the earth tremor had displaced the upper section of the church tower."

The villages of Hanbury and Tutbury were left without mains water, telephone lines were broken, and overhead

power lines brought down by falling debris.

Earth tremors were recorded as far away as Geneva and Rome and the explosion was heard in parts of London as well as areas around the Humber estuary.

The cause of the explosion remained a secret for 30 years. A public inquiry held soon after the tragedy was shrouded in secrecy and the findings were not released until 1974 – under the 30 year rule imposed by defence regulations.

One early theory was that the explosion was caused by an act of sabotage by Italian prisoners of war working in the mine.

Other rumours suggested that it was the work of a spy and there was also a story that there had been some form of mishap with an "American super-bomb" kept in the store.

But the suggestions were laid to rest when it was officially revealed the blast was caused by the method used to chip out composition explosive from a 1,000lb bomb.

The bomb was one of a row and when it exploded it triggered off a chain reaction, detonating all the others along the line. Three and a half thousand tons of high explosive bombs exploded en masse in that single instant.

But the inquiry also revealed that the explosion could have been ten times larger, had the blast spread to the main area where the bombs were stored.

The Air Ministry had acquired the disused alabaster mines in 1937 and they were large enough to accommodate up to 10,000 tons of high-explosive bombs.

Among those who lost their lives were six Italian prisoners of war, RAF servicemen, farmworkers and men working in the nearby alabaster mine.

Eye-witnesses from the villages of Tutbury and Hanbury gave accounts of two distinct explosions and the ground beneath their feet heaved as if an earthquake had occurred.

A mushroom-shaped cloud billowed above the site of Upper Castle Hayes Farm and seconds later debris rained down from a height of 2,000 feet. "They flung themselves to the ground to avoid the lethal hail of earth and stone," according to an account of the disaster.

FLOOD

A reservoir which served the plaster and cement works of Peter Ford Limited, and held by a 30 foot high dam was torn apart.

The water stored had been used when the gypsum was converted into plasterboard.

When the dam crumbled, it released a torrent of water which descended on the gypsum works.

The flood dragged with it tons of mud, trees and boulders and swept over the Goodwins in their motorcar and went on to destroy Peter Ford's works' buildings, burying all those inside.

In fact 32 of Ford's employees died, five working in the mine and 27 in the surface buildings.

Five farmworkers and members of their families vanished without trace at Upper Castle Hayes Farm while another was killed in the fallen buildings at Stafords.

Two civilians were killed by the flood at Purse Cottages and 26 including the six Italians died in the bomb store itself. The disaster also claimed a member of the Mines Rescue Service.

The clearing up operation took months to complete and the disruption of the rock structure at Fauld was so severe, the remaining stocks of ammunition had to be removed.

Work began on removing the explosives two months later and a total of 15,000 tons of small arms ammunition and bombs was transferred to emergency stores at RAF stations at Church Broughton and Tatenhill.

The last bomb was taken out on November 27, 1945, the first anniversary of the explosion.

Fauld, officially known as No 21 MU, was formally disbanded on April 15, 1966 but it was again to be used as a storage depot when the US Army took over the site the following year.

Up to 40,000 tons of explosives were stored in the mine until 1973.

Peter Ford's plasterboard works was never rebuilt but the gypsum mine went on to become the largest in Europe.

OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES

We return to the A518 by Burndhurst Bridge and turn right to Stafford. The road here takes a long slow turn to the left. Driving along the road you often see odd creatures crossing the road. One Spring morning I could see something on the road in front of me but I couldn't make out what it was. It was very low down like a large snake moving across the road. I slowed down and to my astonishment I made out the shape of a mother duck leading a line of tiny ducklings across the road, probably on their way to the River Blythe. Fortunately for them the road was quite free of traffic at the time but then most drivers will slow down at such a sight.

A small brook passes under the road near here. In the last few years the road has been improved here, in other words it has been straightened out. Traffic now travels much faster and drivers often treat the road as they would a motorway. There are regular signs of tyre burns on the road surface showing where drivers have had to brake suddenly to allow vehicles to turn left or right.

One of those little lanes on the right hand side of the road is another road to Gratwich. A note of warning for any unsuspecting motorist venturing along this lane. There are so many lanes with few or no direction signs that you can end up back where you started from.

Returning to the junction with the A518 we turn right towards Stafford and almost immediately on the left hand side is an opening to the driveway to Leafields Farm, once the home of the legendary Gwen Earp-Haward (pronounced Hayward). Here she tells us about her extraordinary life.



Mrs. Gwen Earp-Haward at Stowe-by-Chartley

Life is sweet because of our friends
And the things that in common we share.
We want to live on not because of ourselves
But because of the people who care.
It's giving and doing for somebody else,
On that all life's splendour depends;
And all the joys of this wonderful world
Are found in the keeping of friends.

MRS. GWEN EARP-HAWARD'S STORY

South Africa, tragedy at my birth,
Poppinjay Farm, Uttoxeter, return to South Africa
the letter that changed my life,
farming at Grindley, Women's Land Army,
Rescue of pilot from crashed plane near
Burndhurst Mill, evacuees from London,
my magic carpet, work with children at
Leafields Farm, M.B.E., Priest Hole at Leafields,
Hixon Train Crash, W.I. visit to Fiji, again tragedy,
Harry Lauder

My name is Gwen Earp-Haward. I was born on 27 December 1904 in Johannesburg and baptised Gwendoline Mary Wilks. My father Edward Sherlock Wilks died from T.B. the day after I was born. It was his 30th birthday.

My father had emigrated from Uttoxeter with my mother Emily Fanny Wilks (nee Heath) - she came from Loxley - to Cape Town because of his poor health. It was said that people suffering from T.B. would benefit from the drier climate in South Africa. Cecil Rhodes went to South Africa in very poor health as a young man and went on to found Rhodesia and the De Beers Diamond Mining Company.

My father started an import agency but found the climate of Cape Town wet and cold in winter. He moved with his family to the drier climate of Johannesburg where he continued his business.

When my father died my mother was left with three young children - Marjorie aged five, Edward Sherlock aged two and myself, a newborn baby. A grave mistake was made by whoever selected the man to run my father's business. The man chosen was not very competent so all the work in building up the business was lost. It was a cruel blow to my mother.

After he was demobilised in 1919 he bought Blythe Meadows Farm, Gratwich.

In his letter to me in South Africa Lawrence invited me to come and share poverty and hard work with him as his wife on the farm. We were married on Monday, 16 December 1935 at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Balance Street, Uttoxeter. We lived at Blythe Meadows Farm for nine years and mainly did dairy farming.

During the Second World War I had four evacuees from London to live with us - Sandy, my brother's son, John and Wendy Darling and Shirley. Shirley still comes to stay with me from time to time fifty years after she first came. Sandy and Wendy both live in the U.S.A. By strange coincidence they both came to see me in 1995.

During the War I was the Area Organiser for the Women's Land Army. We had a little hut in Market Square, Hanley and from there I recruited girls for the Land Army. I used to visit the girls once a month on the farms to see that they were alright and generally I looked after their welfare.

One Friday in May 1944 I was driving back home from Uttoxeter on the Stafford Road. Near Alder y Bank I noticed an RAF fighter plane overhead. It seemed to be in trouble and as if the pilot was searching for somewhere suitable to land. As I drove along I saw it come down and crash land in a field opposite Burndhurst Mill. I stopped my car near the scene and ran across the field to the plane. The pilot was unconscious and still strapped in. I had a job releasing his seat belt. At that stage Mr. Bebbington from Burndhurst Mill arrived and helped me drag the unconscious pilot from the wrecked plane. We were both worried it might catch fire at any moment. We put him lying on the ground and then half dragged, half carried him to Burndhurst Mill from where we called an ambulance and the pilot was taken to hospital where he made a full recovery.

I later received a letter from the RAF thanking me for risking my life to save the pilot.

In 1945 we moved to a bigger farm, New Buildings Farm, Grindley further along the road to Stafford. Near the farm was an old track. It could have been part of an ancient way. Near the turn-off for Grindley is a clump of trees where there is supposed to be an old fort. Further down there used to be a ford across the River Blythe where people could cross from Grindley and up to Leese Hill. The signs of the old Stafford to Uttoxeter railway are still there and a bridge can still be seen from the main road.

We continued with dairy farming with a Friesian herd at New Buildings Farm. We stayed there until 1960 when we moved to Leafields Farm, Grindley on the banks of the River Blythe and further down the road towards Uttoxeter. There we had a herd of Jersey cattle. We lived happily at Leafields for 20 years. My husband became ill with cancer and tragically he died in 1966 at the age of 69. We had been married for 31 years.

Some time later I took time off to go and see my sister Marjorie in Cape Town. While I was there fate intervened and I met the man who eventually would become my second husband.

Reg Haward, (pronounced Hayward), a retired engineer from London was holidaying in South Africa. On a trip to the Victoria Falls in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) Reg met my brother Edward Wilks who was also on holiday. Reg and Edward kept bumping into each other at hotels and became quite friendly. My brother promised to meet Reg off the boat at Cape Town. When the time came Edward was unable to meet Reg and asked me if I would meet him instead. I agreed but missed Reg when the boat docked. I managed to 'phone him at his hotel in Cape Town to apologise. I asked Reg how he was enjoying his visit to Southern Africa. He said that what he had seen had been wonderful but that he would like to see some of the country rather than the tourist areas and he would specially like to visit a grape farm.

My mother's father, grandfather William Heath, wrote to my mother in South Africa and offered to look after us if my mother would help him to run Poppinjay Farm just outside Uttoxeter on the Stafford road. My grandmother Elizabeth Heath (nee Buckley) had died a few years earlier.

We went to the Manor House School in Uttoxeter where the library now is. Edward went to Uttoxeter Boys' Grammar School, now Alleyne's High School. Later Marjorie and I went as boarders to a convent school run by French nuns at Rhyl, North Wales. Marjorie went on to qualify as a pharmacist in London and returned to South Africa where she worked at the Addington Hospital in Durban.

For a while she lived in Nyasaland (now Malawi) and while she was there met Hugh Wise, an Englishman who worked for South African Railways. They returned to England to get married at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Balance Street, Uttoxeter. They had three sons - Anthony, Christopher, who became a Christian Brother and is head of their school in Kymberley, South Africa, and Julian who is an engineer. Marjorie lived in Cape Town until she died in September 1995. She was 94.

When Grandfather Heath died Poppinjay Farm was inherited by my mother's older sister Nellie (nee Heath) and her husband Tom Woodward. My mother and I returned to South Africa where we rejoined Marjorie.

In 1934 I received a letter from England that was to change my life. I had known Lawrence Rushton Earp in Uttoxeter. He was one of the Earps of Manor House, Leigh whose descendants had lived there for generations. The Earp family had helped to pay for the costly restoration of Leigh Church. In 1914 at the age of 17 Lawrence had enlisted with the 5th North Staffordshire Regiment and served with them in France. Later he served with the Machine Gun Corps. While he was with the 1st Shropshire Light Infantry he received his commission. In all he served for three and a half years in France.

I had already arranged to visit a large grape farm 23 miles out of Cape Town owned by the Bostock family, whose family owned Lotus Shoe Factory, Stafford! I invited Reg to join me for the drive to the grape farm. That was our first meeting. The time arrived for me to return to England. My sister Marjorie was moving from her house to a flat and offered me her Persian rug. It became my Magic Carpet! I told Marjorie I couldn't take it with me on the plane back to England. Then I remembered Reg Haward. I parcelled up the Persian rug and went to the cruise ship which was docked in the harbour at Cape Town. I went straight to his cabin and put the rug under his bunk. I then went to look for him on the ship. When I found him I asked him if he would look after the rug for me and leave it at Southampton for me to pick up on my return to England. Reg, being a businessman, said, tongue in cheek, "Who pays the duty on the rug?" I told him there was no duty to pay as the rug was an antique. He happily agreed to help me out.

Three weeks later when I'd returned to Leafields Farm I had a letter from Reg asking if he could come and see me on his way to a golfing trip to Scotland. He came to see me and wanted to get engaged there and then but I kept him waiting for two years, stupidly thinking it would be more respectable. On 16 December 1968 we were married at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Uttoxeter. For our honeymoon we went on a world tour. When we came back we continued to live at Leafields Farm.

I was a Justice of Peace for about twenty years and during that time came across a lot of young people in trouble - in trouble at home, at school, with the police. For a brief period I was also a County Councillor. I met a Mr. and Mrs. Haywood who were houseparents at Springfields Childrens' Home on the Stone Road, Stafford.

At that time there was a certain amount of discrimination against youngsters with special needs attending County Council and Holiday Homes. One summer I invited Mr. and Mrs. Haywood to bring about ten boys and girls to camp on our farm for a week. Leafields Farm was a lovely site with the River Blythe running through the fields past the farm. The river wasn't very deep at that point. The children slept in tents and were supervised by the Haywoods. We had a few ponies and a couple of catamarans for the children to use on the river. The boys all had fishing rods.

We had no punishments during the camping holiday. The children on arrival were each allocated twenty points to his or her credit. Points were lost for swearing, bullying, selfishness, telling fibs and breaking down fences when gathering wood for the nightly camp fire. The great prize for good behaviour at the end of the week was a trip to Alton Towers for those who had not lost all their points - but, of course, we took them all. Up to twentyfive children used to come on the camping holiday at Leafields. The children taught me all the latest pop songs of the day.

On occasions I would take the children in a haywaggon drawn by a tractor to visit other farms to acquaint the youngsters with the different types of farming. In the end the police stopped these trips on the haywaggon because of the increased motor traffic on the roads. Can you imagine taking a haywaggon on the A518 today? Our dogs were very popular with the children and came with us on these trips.

Elkes Biscuits in Uttoxeter were very good to us. Whenever we got a patch of bad weather they allowed up to fifteen children to visit the factory. At the end of the visit the children were given large bags of broken biscuits as they came away. That was very popular.

HOLIDAY DOWN ON THE FARM

WHEN it comes to providing holidays for children Gwendoline Earp has got the key to the door.

Every year Mrs Earp, of Leafields Farm, Grindley, opens her farm gate to a group of children from Springfields Children's Home, Stafford, and last week she welcomed a group for the 21st year.

The children spend 10 days on the farm with fishing, camping, swimming, cooking and boating all laid on.

This year 21 children from the home spent 10 days on the farm and made the most of dazzling sun and the fresh country air.

All the boys were provided with fishing rods to pick their wits against the River Blithe trout and had the use of a mini catamaran. The children left the farm on Wednesday to look forward to another holiday provided by the council later in the year.

Mrs Earp is pictured (second from the left) with one of the Springfields officials and a group of children having a swinging time on the banks of the River Blithe.



In 1980 we sold Leafields Farm and moved to The Lodge, Stowe-by-Chartley. Tragically Reg died two years later of cancer. We had been married fourteen years.

In June 1985 I travelled to Buckingham Palace to receive the M.B.E. for my work with the children in Staffordshire and all the many other community activities I was involved in.

My brother Edward Sherlock Wilks had been with Lloyds Bank, Uttoxeter. He was moved to Wellington, Shropshire where he met his wife to be, Elaine. They had one son Edward Sherlock Wilks. My brother died in 1982 in Uttoxeter having moved back in his retirement.

While we lived at Leafields Farm local legend had it that there was a priest hole where Catholic priests would hide in Elizabethan and Cromwellian times. There were regular searches of Catholic homes during those times for priests as the celebration of Mass was strictly forbidden. Despite the ban Mass was celebrated in the area, probably at Leafields Farm. Local people believed that a flag used to be flown from the roof of Leafields Farm to let local Catholics in Kingston and the surrounding areas know that Mass was about to be said. In 1959 we had the farm building re-decorated. We discovered a priest hole. The strange thing about it is that there had been a programme on the radio about a priest hole at Leafields Farm a few weeks beforehand. We had the hiding place made into a drinks cupboard. There was a ditch from the hole into an adjoining field. We had it covered up.

For twenty years I was a member of the W.R.V.S. - the Women's Royal Voluntary Service. From 1958 to 1975 I was the Uttoxeter Rural Area Organiser. We used to do all sorts of things - serving tea at hospitals, collecting and distributing second-hand clothes, running Clubs for the elderly.

At the time of the rail disaster at Hixon in 1967 we worked all through the night serving members of the emergency services with food and drink. To have been President of Uttoxeter Division of St. John Ambulance Brigade for twentyfive years has been a wonderful experience. It has been a privilege to know all those gallant people who put in many hours of work - ready to help wherever they are needed - all voluntary - true dedication.

I was President of Stowe-by-Chartley W.I. (Women's Institute) for nearly twenty years. One of my greatest joys was being asked to represent the National Federation of W.I's on a trip to Dominica. Dominica then was a poverty-stricken island with bananas the only export. Staffordshire's W.I's adopted the island and collected cotton material to be sent there for childrens' clothes. I went out to see if it was a worthwhile charity to continue. Indeed it was, for the mothers were not given ready-made clothes but had to go to the Civic Centre to learn how to make the clothes themselves while listening to talks on feeding their families and managing their money, which was very little.

When I went there was only one sewing machine on the island. When I got back I begged two more. Fyfes the banana company transported the sewing machines from England to Dominica free of charge.

Before that I had already been sent by the National Federation to Fiji on a return visit for a Fijian woman who came here through a fund called "Pennies for Friendship" to learn things that could be helpful to her own people in Fiji. She lived on the island of Boa, twenty miles out of Suva. She was a school mistress married to the Chief. I was the first white woman to visit the island.

I knew Mr. Wilmot Martin, the Hixon farmer, very well. He was better known as the Staffordshire Harry Lauder who with his little band raised thousands of pounds for charitable causes. He and I opened many a village fete together.

I was always interested in the activities of the Young Farmers Club from the time they used our Jersey herd for cattle judging. In 1980 they elected me as their County President and at the end of my term of office asked me to stay on for another year. They then made me a Life Member of S.Y.F.C. (Staffordshire Young Farmers' Club). The Young Farmers were entirely responsible for my M.B.E. They wrote to every prominent farmer asking them to write to the Lord Lieutenant.

One of my favourite hobbies is playing bridge. It gives me endless pleasure. I am not a member of a Club, just house to house bridge with friendly four-somes.

I will be 92 in December 1996. I am very fortunate to be in good health mentally and physically and still able to drive myself to wherever I want to go. My most recent drive was to Congleton, about forty miles away, to visit a friend.

It is astonishing the number of inventions and events that have taken place in the ninety odd years since Mrs. Earp-Hayward's birth in 1904. I am sure you can add your own list to the one I've drawn up below:

<u>Inventions</u>	<u>Events</u>
Telephone	Sinking of The Titanic
Television	World War I
Video	World War 2
Micro Chips	The Cold War
Personal Computer (P.C.)	The Rise & Fall of the Berlin Wall
Inter-Net & E-mail	Jet Travel
Mobile Phone	Man on the Moon
Washing Machine	Space Probes/Exploration
Penicillin	Supersonic Travel
Sliced Bread	Motorways
Tea-bags	The Chunnel
Instant Coffee, Gravy & Custard	Artificial Insemination
Fridges, Freezers & frozen food	Test-tube babies
Electric kettle	Cloning - Dolly the sheep
Electric toaster	Kidney & Heart transplants followed by
Nylon	Lung transplants
Plastic	Aids
Credit Cards	B.S.E. & E.Coli
Radar	Equal Opportunities
Lasers	& Votes for women
Digital Watches, Cameras, T.V.	Electrification
Optical fibres	Nuclear Power
Juggernauts	North Sea Oil & Gas
	Decimalisation
	Nationalisation
	Privatisation
	Partition of Ireland
	Break up of British Empire
	Independence of African Colonies
Fast Food Take-Aways	Partition of India
Death of Diana Princess of Wales	European Union
Welsh & Scottish Assemblies	Break up of Russian Empire & Communism
	National Lottery

OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES

Coming away from Leafields Farm as we approach the A518 once more we can see Leafields Cottage on the left hand side. Until a few years ago the road ran right alongside Leafields Cottage. So close was the road that cars sometimes ended up crashing into it. The road here used to be very twisty with several bad bends and needed to be brought up to modern standards. During the alterations to the road a young man from Hixon was killed in a motor accident near this spot and I'll talk about that and other accidents later on.

Earlier we heard that John Fisher's great grandparents Joseph and Harriet Fisher lived in their retirement at Leafields Cottage.

R.I.P.

On Thursday, 24 March 1994 near here 33 year old Nicholas Herbert of Stowe by Chartley lost control of his car and was killed in a collision with a JCB digger parked off the road. The JCB was being used in roadworks to improve the road.

The road from here on is wide and sweeps up the hill in a gentle curve. Near the top of the hill is the turning for the hamlet of Grindley but just before that also on the left hand side is a small copse said to be the site of a moat. We'll stop off at Grindley to hear Colin Deaville's story.

COLIN DEAVILLE'S STORY

Grindley, News of the Boer War at
Uttoxeter Telegraph Office, the Stafford-Uttoxeter
Line - the Clog & Knocker, the Green Bus Company,
the Milk Train, the Meynell Hunt, Alfred McCann,
the last train, Blythe Bridge Mill, Burndhurst Mill,
a lengthsman called Peg Leg Richardson,
war-time underground store at Amerton,
the ghost of Weston Hall

My name is Colin Randles Deaville. I was born on
27 March 1923 at Wood House Farm, Grindley, five
miles from Uttoxeter just off the A518. My parents
were Daniel William and Beatrice Jane (nee Roberts)
Deaville. My grandparents, William and Mary (nee
Randles) Deaville came to farm at Wood House Farm
in 1879 when William Deaville became the tenant
there. The farm was then part of the Chartley
Estate. My grandmother's family, the Randles,
lived at Grindley Farm just down the road.

My maternal grandparents were Colin and Ruth (nee
Keeling) Roberts. Grandfather Roberts came from
the Potteries. He started work on the North
Staffordshire Railway Line (N.S.R.L.), the Old
Knotty, at Stoke-on-Trent. Later he moved to the
Telegraph Office at Uttoxeter Station. My grand-
mother often recalled the excitement in Uttoxeter
when they received the news at the Telegraph Office
of the Relief of Mafeking, South Africa. It had
been besieged by the Boers for seven months in 1900
during the Boer War. When he retired grandfather
Roberts was Chief Superintendent of the Telegraph
Department at Stoke Station.

I went to school at the old Heath School in Holly
Road, Uttoxeter. It's now called St. Mary's C. of
E. First School and our daughter Alicia Waghorn is
a teacher there. Every Monday morning I used to
catch the train from Stafford at Grindley and go to
Uttoxeter where I'd stay with my grandmother Roberts
during the week.

I'd go to school each day from her house at Heath Edge, Dollis Hill and on Friday evening I'd catch the train back home to Grindley to spend the week-end at my parents' farm.

From the Heath School I went on to Uttoxeter Grammar School. By that time Whieldons were running a daily bus service between Rugeley and Uttoxeter. The bus service took in all the local villages - Admaston, Turn, Newton, Drointon, Grindley, Blythe Bridge, Kingston and Loxley. The Green Bus Company it was called. I was able to catch the bus every day for school in Uttoxeter and come home to Grindley every evening. As I finished at Uttoxeter Boys' Grammar School it was about to amalgamate with Uttoxeter Girls High School. Some of the girls had parts in the school production of Gilbert and Sullivan's H.M.S. Pinafore - quite a breakthrough for those days.

I started at Rodbaston Agricultural College, Penkridge but had to leave in 1939 at the outbreak of the Second World War.

The College was taken over by the Government and used for training girls and women as Land Girls. Land Girls took over all the farm jobs vacated by men who had been called up or volunteered to fight in the Armed Forces.

I remember hearing the explosions of bombs dropping in the area. I later found out four bombs had been dropped near Loxley Crossroads - three in the woods and one in a field on the other side of the road. A few hundred feet more and they would have dropped on the railway line.

I went back to my parents' farm at Grindley and helped my father with the mixed dairy and sheep farming business. Wood House Farm was right next to Grindley Station on the Uttoxeter to Stafford Railway Line - the Old Clog and Knocker it was called locally.

Our farm was one of the many local farms supplying milk to the London dairies. A special Milk Train called at all the railway stations on the line between Ingestre Station at Weston and Uttoxeter.

George Robinson from Stowe by Chartley collected the milk in 17 gallon churns from the surrounding farms and took them in his lorry to Grindley Station. The Milk Train picked them up from there and continued on down the line to Uttoxeter and then on to the L.N.E.R. Station at Friarsgate, Derby. The milk was then loaded onto a train for London.

In Spring each year the London Milk buyers would arrive and book into the White Hart Hotel, Carter Street, Uttoxeter. They would negotiate milk prices and contracts with local dairy farmers. Farmers who had given a regular supply over the twelve months were offered a better rate - usually 1d. or 2d. (old money) more per gallon. I can still remember some of the names of those London dairies - Adams, Snewin and Brinkler. I believe one of the dairies we supplied milk to was at Finsbury Park, North London.

There was quite a climb for the trains coming from Chartley and you could hear the engine labouring on its way up to Grindley. We children used to say, 'Here comes a train from Chartley, Dam and Bugger fetch an other' to the rhythm of the steam engine. A more refined line was, 'Jam and Sugar fetch an other'. When the train was straining to get up the incline we'd say, 'I think I can. I think I can.' 'I think I can.' 'I think I can.' Then with what sounded like a great relief, the train would roll into Grindley.

The Uttoxeter to Stafford Railway Line was quite a busy line. A regular train was the 10.30 p.m. Goods Train which used to come rattling down from Stafford on its way to Derby. Every night Wood House Farmhouse would shake as it went by. In the 20's and 30's there was a lot of traffic on the line. Beet pulp was another local product that was transported.

Once a year Grindley Station was visited by the Meynell Hunt - fox hunting was more acceptable in those days and was regarded as a way of reducing vermin. A special dock was put in at Grindley Station to unload the horses from their horse boxes. The Meynell Hunt used to meet in a field opposite the Station which was near Wood House Farm. They would stable their spare horses at our farm. A groom would stay to look after them while the Hunt was on. He would meet the Hunt at pre-arranged places with the fresh horses and then bring the tired ones back. As a boy I used to run in front of the Hunt to open the gates. I was awarded a 6d. piece for my efforts. Some of the names I remember from the Meynell Hunt are Sir Geoffrey Congreve of Chartley Hall, Mr. Nuttall of Park Hall, Leigh and the Betsons who were local farmers. I have a postcard showing the Meynell Hunt setting off from nearby Grindley Station in 1926. It could well be one of Alfred McCann's postcards.

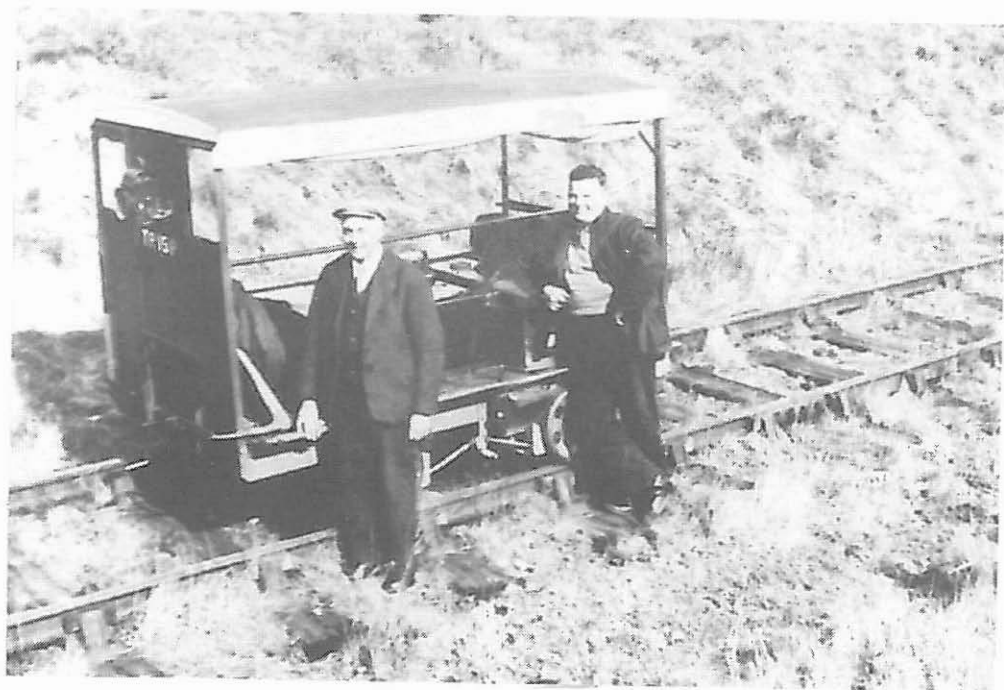
Alfred's father, Edward McCann had a tobacconist shop in Uttoxeter at 25 High Street, just up from the Town Hall. Alfred ran his Photographic Studio in the shop next door. My grandfather Colin Roberts was quite friendly with Alfred McCann. He said Alfred McCann used to photograph everything - carnivals, flower shows, etc.

John Eagle who lived at Ivy Cottage, Grindley used to walk along the track and through the tunnel at Gravelly Bank to man the signal box at Bramshall, or Bromshall as the railway referred to it.

I remember Jack Williams who was head ganger for the railway maintenance crew and Reg Durose who was the driver of the little railway cart they used to go up and down the line.



Meynell Hunt setting off from
Grindley Station, 6 February 1926



Jack Williams, head ganger, and
Reg Durose who worked on the maintenance of the
Stafford - Uttoxeter railway line.

A man by the name of Duffin lived at Blythe Bridge Mill. He was quite a small man. He had a variety of cattle feeds delivered by rail to Grindley Station where he had a store. Local farmers came and bought grain and other necessities from him. Mr. Duffin also ground oats for local farmers at his Blythe Bridge Mill. He was an agent for a large grain supplier and had an office and depot in Derby. I remember there was a spring in the pantry at Blythe Bridge Mill.

Blythe Bridge itself was a busy hamlet a few miles from Grindley with a blacksmith, a wheelwright, a public house and of course the Mill. I remember Mr. Brandrick the wheelwright and the blacksmith, Mr. Roberts, working together to put iron hoops on the cart wheels. Brushwood was used to make a fire to heat the iron hoops to make them pliable and easier to fit round the wooden wheels. When the iron hoop was red hot it was placed round the wooden wheel. When it was in place buckets of water were thrown over it, making it contract and fit snugly round the wheel. I remember the hissing noise it made and the clouds of steam that arose from the cold water meeting the hot metal.

When Mr. Duffin died Blythe Bridge Mill closed. We then took our oats for grinding to Burndhurst Mill further back on the river at Lower Loxley on the Stafford - Uttoxeter Road. Nonellys lived at Burndhurst Mill. They also had a farm and ran a bus service collecting children from the farms and hamlets in the area and taking them to Leigh Village Junior School and picking them up again after school. They were an enterprising family the Nonellys, for they also had a sheepwash just below the Mill wheel. We used to take about fifty sheep along the main road. We had to make sure that any side roads or gaps in hedges were blocked off - usually by one of us standing in the way. There wasn't a lot of traffic on the road in those days and people weren't in such a hurry so no-one was really inconvenienced.

On arriving at Burndhurst Mill you sometimes found you had to wait your turn while sheep from other farms were washed. The sheep were penned in on one side of the river. Two men would then throw the sheep in one at a time near the water wheel, which was locked. Another man stood in a tub attached to the wall of the Mill and with a long pole he pushed the sheep under the water to make sure they were completely submerged. The sheep bobbed up gasping and swam vigorously to where the water was shallow and clambered onto a little island where, obviously relieved, they shook themselves to get rid of the water. From there they were collected. Farmers got more money for wool when it looked clean and it was a lot easier to shear a sheep when it was clean. Bebbingtons took over Burndhurst Mill after the Nonellys.

In winter the fields by the River Blythe were often flooded. Burndhurst Mill was flooded on many occasions.

When I was a boy various stretches of the road were looked after by a lengthsman whose responsibility was to keep the road in good order. The lengthsman from Grindley down to Amerton was a man called Peg Leg Richardson. Peg Leg was so named because he had a wooden leg. Local people were amazed at his ability not only in doing a good job as lengthsman but in his way of cycling and carrying his tools around strapped to the cross bar of his bike. Peg Leg knew every inch of the road. He wasn't very happy with farmers who, coming down hills, used the grass verges and banks to help them brake their heavily laden carts. In so doing they destroyed a lot of his hard work. Peg Leg would leave his barrow, brush and shovel under a hedge at the end of the day and no-one would touch them until he returned the next working day.

In those days when cars were only for the well-off and privileged, people walked everywhere. There were lots of shortcuts and paths. From Leafields below Grindley you could cross the River Blythe and go up to Leese Hill near where the Golf Club is now overlooking the A518.

Just below Grindley itself there was a lag pole across the river which was used by locals to get across. My father used it on occasions of social visits to Leese Hall.

Gratwich Wood used to stretch along Gratwich Wood Lane up to Bank Top Farm. It was cut down during the 1914-1918 war. My father remembered it.

At the top of Grindley is a moated site. When renovation work was being carried out some years ago at Leafields Farm just below Grindley, it is said that an old chapel window was uncovered.

The Stafford - Uttoxeter Road has changed a lot since I was a lad. In some places it's hard to remember what the old road looked like. At Loxley the road did practically a semi-circle. I can remember that bend being straightened out just after the war. A section of the old road now forms a useful lay-by.

The road was a lot safer and slower than it is now. Near Loxley Hall farmers used to turn their cattle onto the road so that the cattle could water from the watering holes in the red brick wall running alongside the main road. The wall on the main road by Loxley Hall was red brick with the name Loxley spelt out in blue bricks. The wall was destroyed when the road was improved a few years ago.

When I was a lad at Grindley I used to take the cows out on the road and they would make their own way over the railway bridge to the pastures. All we did was to shut the gates behind them. We'd do the same in the evenings when they came back for milking.

A man whose name I can't recall was linesman at Chartley and if I remember correctly a Mr. Horobin did the Hixon end.

I remember well the closure of the Stafford - Uttoxeter Railway Line - the old Clog and Knocker. It had been a gradual thing as motorised transport improved. The first service that went was the Passenger Service. Next the Milk Train was cut. Last of all the Goods Train was stopped. We were still sending milk up to London when the last Goods Train ran in 1951. We had been sending milk to the same dairy in London - Adams Dairy - for thirty years or more. The Milk Marketing Board now told us where we had to send our milk. A private road haulier used to collect the milk in ten gallon churns and take it to Walsall.

On 23 March 1957 a special train was run by the Stephenson Locomotive Society - a steam enthusiast group - along the old Stafford - Uttoxeter Line. It ran as far as Bramshall where the junction with the Derby - Stoke Line is. On the way back it made a final stop at Grindley. I heard the train coming and ran out to take some photos of its last journey. The old line is now in a sorry state - the rails are long gone, in places the track is overgrown, in others it forms part of farm tracks; some people have extended their back gardens onto it and one end of the tunnel at Aldery Bank has been filled in. The cutting at Lower Loxley has been filled in and is now part of a farmer's land, British Gas has built some sort of pumping apparatus on the line at Amerton, bridges have been knocked down and so it goes on. What a sad end for a railway line which served so many people over ninety years.

In the following pages I have used some of Colin Deaville's old newspaper cuttings and photos on the closure of the old Stafford - Uttoxeter railway line.



The last train reversing under the bridge at
Grindley, 23 March 1957

Note the steam in front of the train.

The train went from Stafford to Bramshall (Bromshall)
junction and then reversed back along the line.
Colin Deaville dashed out and took this photograph
when he heard the train going by.

RAILWAY ENTHUSIASTS

PACK LAST TRAIN

Stafford-Uttoxeter

Line To Disappear

MARCH 1957.

AFTER 90 YEARS' SERVICE

LONDON has a "local" train received such a full complement of passengers as the 2.51 p.m. from Stafford to Bromshall Junction, Uttoxeter, on Saturday. It was the first and last train to pass along the old Stafford-Uttoxeter line for six years and more than 220 railway enthusiasts from as far afield as London, Manchester, Brighton and Kendal, filled the three coaches on the push-pull set that was used. Now the century-old track is to be dismantled and the land sold.

As the special train, drawn by the side tank engine No. 41224 and chartered by the Midland area of the Stephenson Locomotive Society, pulled out of Stafford station, the driver, Mr. James Tildesley, of Stafford, gave a long blast on the whistle, which was taken up in chorus by other locomotives in the vicinity.

Children on bridges and seated on the fence bordering the track waved and shouted as the train sped by. Adults stood in silent groups at various points along the line to watch the passage of the train. Cattle fled at the sight of the strange monster, belching smoke and steam, whistling as it sped along at 15 miles per hour. The country stations were crowded with local residents and their families who had come to see the train pass through their village.

SOUVENIR PICTURES

Brief halts were made at Ingestre, Chartley and Grindley on the four-hour trip, to enable the big group of amateur photographers to take their pictures, inspect the rotting station buildings and the rusty condition of the single-line track.

At Chartley, a section of the station platform had been turned into a poultry run. Chartley was once the railroad for pottery going to the Continent by train ferry wagons. At Grindley, a group of enthusiasts found the open door of the station master's office and spent a happy ten minutes browsing through and selecting souvenirs from the

sheafs of old papers, records and documents that littered the floor. Others examined the remains of the rock plants and weeds in the station garden. In the hey day of the line there were annual competitions for the best kept station garden along the line.

FORMER MILK TRAFFIC

Both Chartley and Grindley had substantial milk traffic at one time, as much as a hundred 17-gallon churns being despatched daily from Grindley. The "milk train" ran almost to the closure of the line on March 5th, 1951. Salt and gypsum were mined in the Weston area. Passenger traffic, which had always been light, was withdrawn from all stations by December 3rd, 1939. The newly-installed war-time passenger service was then one train each way. Salt station was closed to all traffic from December 3rd, 1939, but the other three stations remained open to goods traffic until the last.

At the end of the 12-mile line at Bromshall Junction on the Stoke to Uttoxeter line, the party got out of the train to walk the few remaining yards to the end of the track. More photographs were taken and 15 minutes later, the "special" was on its way back to Stafford. It was the first time such a journey had been run in the Midlands on a line out of commission as long as six years.

UNDERGROWTH CLEARED

For two weeks work had been going ahead to clear the track of undergrowth and small

Newspaper cutting
courtesy

Colin Deaville.

trees, which had taken root during the line's six-year quiescence. The permanent way inspector at Stafford, Mr. H. L. C. Reynolds, said that the metals and sleepers were found to be in an extraordinary good condition and were fit for any type of train. The sidings were still intact and the condition of points and crossings was excellent. The work of clearing the branch line was supervised and carried out by a ganger and two men using a motor trolley stabled at a garage at Chartley, approximately the centre of line.

Linking Stafford and Uttoxeter and providing a routeway to the Eastern counties, the railway was authorised on July 29th, 1862, when Royal Assent was given to an Act of Parliament establishing the Stafford and Uttoxeter Railway Company and giving it power to construct a railway between Stafford and Bromshall Junction, two miles West of Uttoxeter, where it joined the old North Staffordshire Railway, and just North of Stafford station, the North Western line.

CONSTRUCTION RECALLED

An Act of May 20th, 1865, together with the 1862 Act authorised capital of £180,000 and debentures of £59,000. The 12 miles 60 chains line was opened for traffic on December 23rd, 1867, but as the estimated cost of construction had been exceeded, further debentures were issued to an extent of £38,132.

Last year (1994) the road near Leafields Farm and the top of the hill near Grindley was straightened. It had been full of bends and wasn't suitable for modern-day traffic.

At Gravelly Bank there is now a straight stretch about a mile long and on this section motorists really do use it as a race-track. At one time the road went up over the hill between the General's Farmhouse and the Keeper's Cottage and came back down near the notice to Chartley Park Farm. The land where the straight section of the road is now used to be very boggy, which is probably why the road went over the hill originally.

At Amerton, going towards Stafford, there used to be a road leading directly to Shirleywich on the A51, just before Amerton Farm. During the Second World War the road was closed, Greaves Farm was pulled down and acres of land covered in concrete to make Hixon Airfield for the R.A.F.

There was a bomb store at Amerton. The site can still be seen today from the main road on the right-hand side just before you enter Amerton going towards Stafford; a strip of concrete marks the site.

Grindley Station was used by the R.A.F. during the war to transport ammunition. It was picked up by R.A.F. lorries and stored at Abbots Bromley in the woods by Heatley. When ammunition was required by the R.A.F. lorries took it from Bromley and loaded it onto the trains at Grindley Station.

There were also R.A.F. storage facilities at Lower Loxley and a section of railway line ran from the main line to sheds there. The sheds are still there but are now used by local farmers.

Just outside the village of Weston, by Weston Bank, is Weston Hall which was once a Dower House owned by the Earl of Shrewsbury. My mother-in-law told me she used to go to the Annual Tenants' Ball there. There was talk of a ghost there - a lady in grey. There used to be a road from Weston Hall to Ingestre Hall.

I met my wife Mary Brooks at a Youth Club in Stowe Village Hall. We married in 1948. We put our name down for one of the Council's agricultural workers' cottages at Blythe Bridge. We stayed there for two years.

I took over Wood House Farm from my father in 1958. My father died in 1964 and my mother died in 1975.

We have two daughters, Alicia (married name Waghorn) and Charlotte (married name Edwards) and four grandchildren, Philip, Francis, Matthew and Lewis.



Grindley Station circa 1957.

Photo courtesy of Mrs. Mary Cartmail

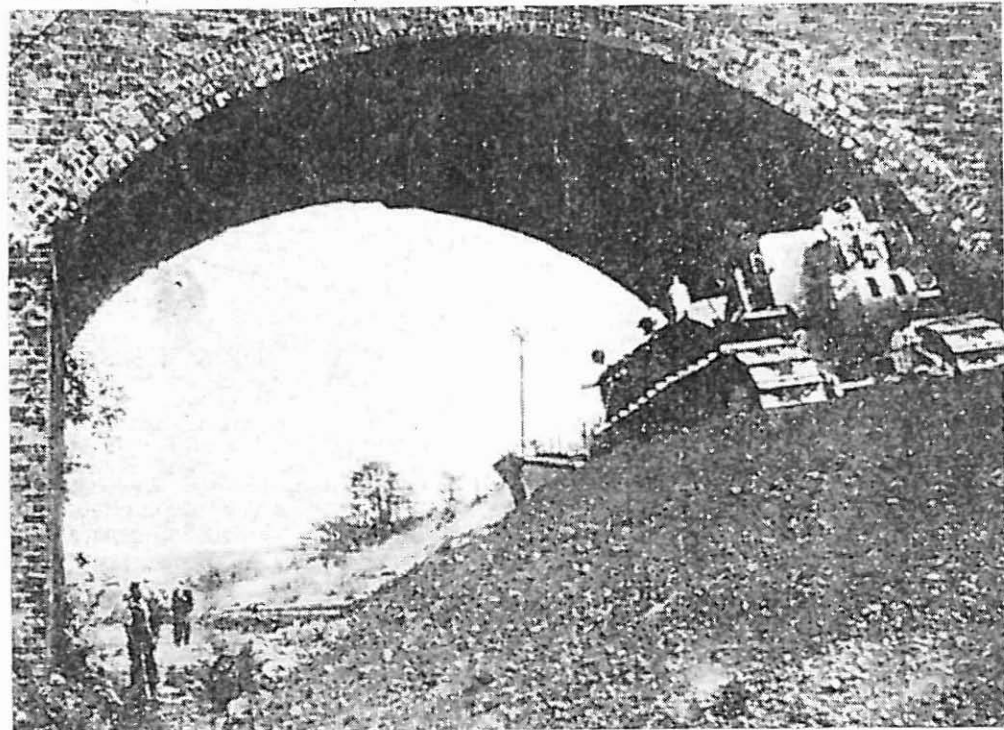
R.I.P. Colin Deaville died on 27 November 1997.



Rail enthusiasts gather on the line at
Grindley Station during the final run on the
Stafford - Uttoxeter line on 23 March 1957.

Photo H.B. Oliver and courtesy Colin Deaville.

Big Job On An Old Railway Line



A giant bulldozer at work bracing tons of earth and rubble beneath the arches of the crumbling railway bridge at Grindley.

FROM within a 50-foot railway cutting at Grindley, near the Stafford to Uttoxeter road, a giant bulldozer ripped into the banks scattering everything which came in its path.

Belching smoke and with an angry chatter which could be heard from one end of the little hamlet to the other, it was filling in the three arches of the Grindley road bridge, deemed unsafe to vehicular traffic.

This work, sub-contracted by Cox and Danks, Limited, of Birmingham, who have undertaken demolition of a four-mile stretch of this derelict line, which extends from Stafford to Bramshall Junction, near Uttoxeter, was carried out last week.

At each bite from its 13-foot

blade, which is four and a half feet in depth, the bulldozer shifted between ten and 15 tons of rubble from the side of the cutting. The sand, earth and rock dislodged are being braced up against the walls of the bridge.

NEW ROADWAY

When the three arches are packed solid from both sides, the bridge will be collapsed, and a new roadway laid over the top. The sub-contract for the filling in of the bridge and subsequent new roadway is being undertaken for Cox and Danks by the Road Surfacing Company, of Edgbaston, Birmingham.

Meanwhile, the work of demolition goes on. Convoys of lorries are taking loads of metal and sleepers away, and down the track gaping troughs indicate the former position of

the permanent way. Far down the line in the direction of Loxley and Bramshall, the team with oxy-acetylene burners continue cutting through the rails on this track which has remained undisturbed for 8 years.

Already valuable timbers from buildings along this stretch of line have been torn off, but the faded green and yellow facade of the wooden Grindley station buildings at present still stands.

Progress made by the demolition men has attracted many visitors to this quiet spot, and high above the cutting the occupants of the former stationmaster's house, which is surrounded by a wall of railway sleepers, advertise cut flowers for sale to the week-end trippers.

OUR JOURNEY CONTINUES

Going back towards the A518 just before the junction with it on the right hand side is the entrance to a field. If we stop here we can leisurely look at the pleasant scene before us. The road sweeps down to the valley of the Blythe and up again on the other side of the valley to Aldery Bank from where Leese Hill can be seen running along to the right. You can trace the path of the old Stafford - Uttoxeter railway line by the long straight line of trees along the bottom of the valley beneath Leese Hill. Looking straight across from where you are parked you can see the Weaver Hills in the distance. Immediately on our left hand side is a large house which was once several farm-workers' cottages, New Buildings Cottages.



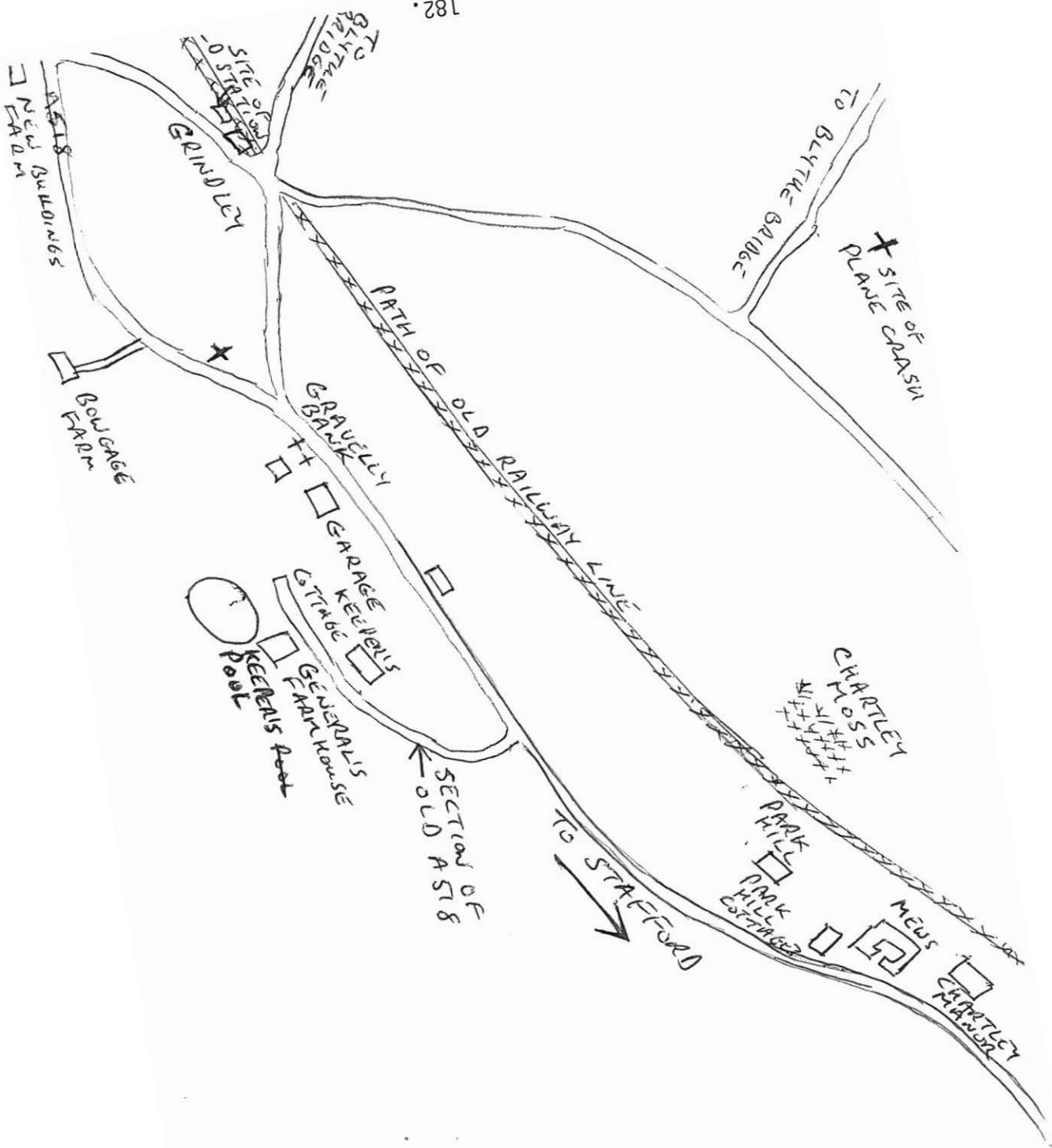
Continuing up the hill you can still see traces of the old A518 on the right hand side. There was another series of bad bends near here. Further back can be seen a New Buildings Farm. We now reach the top of the hill and at nearly 500 feet above sea level there are panoramic views from east to west - Leese Hill, the cooling towers of Rugeley Power Station to the south, Cannock Chase to the south-west identifiable by Pye Green Radio Mast and on a good day when the air is clear, usually after a spell of rain, you can see what I believe is the Long Mynd fifty or sixty miles away to the west in Shropshire. During the Second World War the fires caused by German incendiary bombs dropped on Birmingham, Coventry, Wolverhampton and other Black Country industrial cities must have been clearly visible from the road along here.

At the end of this straight stretch of road Chartley Castle can just be seen at the end of another longer straight stretch of road at a lower level.

During the time of Mary Queen of Scots' imprisonment at Chartley Hall there could well have been a beacon near here as part of an early warning system should the Spanish attempt to invade England. Such an invasion could well have signalled an uprising by Catholic nobles and an attempt by them to free Mary from her prison at Chartley Hall and place her on the throne of England.

R.I.P.

On 20 April 1994 near here 52 year old Rosamund Ratcliff of Stubwood, Denstone was killed at roadworks while driving towards Stafford. The roadworks were being carried out to improve the road.





The A518 at Gravelly Bank looking towards Chartley Castle which is just visible in the far distance.

R.I.P.

Just down the bank on the right hand side are two small wooden crosses marking the spot where on 13 December 1986 Elizabeth Meddings, 9, and her cousin Christopher Burnett, 6, were knocked down and killed by a car which careered onto the grass verge where they were walking to deliver a birthday card to their aunt in the nearby garage.

Grieving parents' roadside memorial



● Mr Meddings looking over the crosses on the spot where the two children were killed.

GRIEF-STRICKEN parents have erected a memorial at the scene of an horrific accident in which their daughter and her cousin were killed.

Two simple wooden crosses — with holly wreaths — mark the spot where nine-year-old Elizabeth Meddings and six-year-old Christopher Burnett died.

The two were mown down by a runaway car as they walked the short distance from Elizabeth's home at Stowe-by-Chartley, near Stafford, to take a birthday card to their aunt.

Anniversary

The memorial was erected by 35-year-old Mr George Meddings on the first anniversary of the tragedy.

He said: "It's not a very cheerful time for us but we thought we ought to commemorate it in some way."

Elizabeth, her brother David, now aged nine, and Christopher, whose home was at Rocester, near Uttoxeter, were taking the card to Mrs Joyce Davies when a car out of control mounted a grass verge and hit them. Only David survived.



David Meddings
He survived



Elizabeth Meddings
She died



Christopher Burnett
He died

The bottom of Gravelly Bank marks the start of a long straight stretch of road ending at Chartley Manor Farm. Locals call it the race track because of the way some motorists speed along here in all sorts of weather. Previously the road turned to the right just after the garage and went up the hill by the General's Farmhouse, presumably to avoid boggy land. The road came down the hill a hundred yards or so from Chartley Manor Farm. Not far from here is the world-renowned S.S.I. Site (Special Scientific Interest) - Chartley Moss.

Nature reserve grows

CHARTLEY Moss nature reserve is to grow in size by nearly six acres giving added protection to the 260-acre site of special scientific interest.

The mass of peat floating on top of an underground lake is one of the rarest habitats in Europe and has several plants and animals living there which are found nowhere else. At present, less than half of the area is a national nature reserve, which gives it special protection from English Nature.

Deputy county planning director Jo Barnes said: "The floating raft is considered to be the best example of a Schwingmoor or floating mire in the British Isles. The floating peat, with its associated sphagnum moss, supports a number of rare or local bog plants including round-leaved sundew, cotton grasses, cross-leaved heath and bog rosemary."

Staffordshire Newsletter, Friday, July 5, 1996



CHARTLEY MOSS

National Nature Reserve

Chartley Moss National Nature reserve is situated 13 kilometres (eight miles) north east of Stafford and just south of the Stafford-Uttoxeter Road. The 42 hectare reserve was established by lease in 1963.

The Moss is a large floating bog occupying two of the many hollows which occur in the glacial drift deposits of boulder clay, sand and gravel which covers much of the North Staffordshire, North Shropshire and Cheshire Plain. These hollows were formed in several ways; some are simply undulations in the drift deposits; others were occupied by huge blocks of ice buried in the mineral debris and left behind as the ice sheets retreated; several are subsidence hollows formed as the overlying strata collapsed into spaces left by the solution of underground salt deposits. Many of these hollows, however formed, filled with water. Peat formation is a common feature of still or slow moving waters where there is insufficient oxygen to cause decay, and dead plant material therefore

accumulates. The mires of the north west midlands have largely formed by the slow infilling with peat of the meres which occupied hollows in the drift. As the name 'floating bog' implies, the peat which makes up the surface of Chartley Moss is floating as a raft over water. This raft of peat varies in thickness, with the water breaking the surface in two places, and the underlying lake is up to 10 m deep. In fact the situation is more complicated than it appears since successive pool formation caused by local subsidence of the surface is followed by the development of a fresh peat raft over the pool. Thus the underlying water is in the form of a series of lenses rather than a continuous underground reservoir. The bog is in a state of continual change and the surface is extremely treacherous.

The edges of the bog basin consist of solid peat and to the east of the floating bog a shallower second depression in the drift deposits is filled with a solid mass of peat.

The surface of the bog is a living carpet of specialised plants capable of tolerating permanent waterlogging, extreme acidity and low nutrient levels. The local name 'Moss' is descriptive since chief amongst these plants are the bog mosses. The *Sphagnum* mosses predominate and here the commonest is *S. recurvum* which forms a level carpet over the surface broken by hummocks of other *Sphagnum* species and *Aulacomnium palustre*. Rooted in the mosses are other bog plants such as cranberry, round-leaved sundew, cotton grasses, cross-leaved heath and bog rosemary. This last plant is of particular interest since at Chartley Moss it is right on the extreme south east limit of its distribution in Britain.

On the areas of solid peat, and on the thicker parts of the floating raft, pine and birch trees form quite dense woodland, with wavy-hair grass and bilberry chief among the ground flora. At the edges of the bog basin oak also grows with bracken and bramble. The pines can establish themselves readily on hummocks in the floating bog but grow very slowly and, as their weight depresses the floating peat, their roots become waterlogged and they die.

Where the peat meets the mineral soil at the edge of the bog basin, a narrow band of fen plants occurs with alder trees, bittersweet, saw sedge, gipsywort and tussock sedge. At one point a quite extensive area of fen exists surrounded by bog. Research is at present being carried out to find out how and why this

extraordinary area of fen developed.

Although the reserve is completely isolated from other bog areas it has retained a very rich invertebrate fauna particularly associated with bogs, including a number of rare dragonflies, caddis flies and beetles. Chartley Moss is the only place in Britain where a small beetle *Cryptocephalus decem-maculatus*, is known to occur; and another of the rarities of the place, the caddis fly *Neuronia clathrata*, is found in only four other British localities. Reserve management has to take the specialised requirements of these and other rare species into account.

Among the larger animals, badgers live on the edge of the bog basin, frogs and toads breed in the fen ditches and adders are extremely common over the whole reserve. When they have just emerged from their winter quarters, and are rather sluggish, they constitute another hazard for the visitor.

The reserve is managed to maintain the interesting plant communities with their associated fauna. Particular care is taken to ensure that, as far as possible, conditions remain suitable for the particular rarities found here.

In order to prevent excessive damage to the delicate bog surface, and to help safeguard visitors, a walkway has been constructed round the central part of the floating bog.

Because of the danger to visitors, and the easily damaged bog surface, access to Chartley Moss is by permit only.

Beauty spot has peat bog twin

A STAFFORDSHIRE beauty spot has become the focus for a pioneering international experiment.

Chartley Moss, near Stafford, has been linked with a Japanese mire in the world's first international peat bog twinning.

Scientists from Japan's Hokkaido University met with boffins from Nottingham University and English Nature at the site to launch a joint investigation of the wetland.

Leading authority

They hope findings from the 40-acre bog could help protect its Japanese twin, Tskukigaumi Mire.

Chartley Moss peat bog is one of only two of its type in Britain.

English Nature site manager Tim Colshaw said: "Japan's leading authority on peat mires, Dr Hidenori Takahashi, accepted our twinning

pledge on behalf of Tskukigaumi Mire.

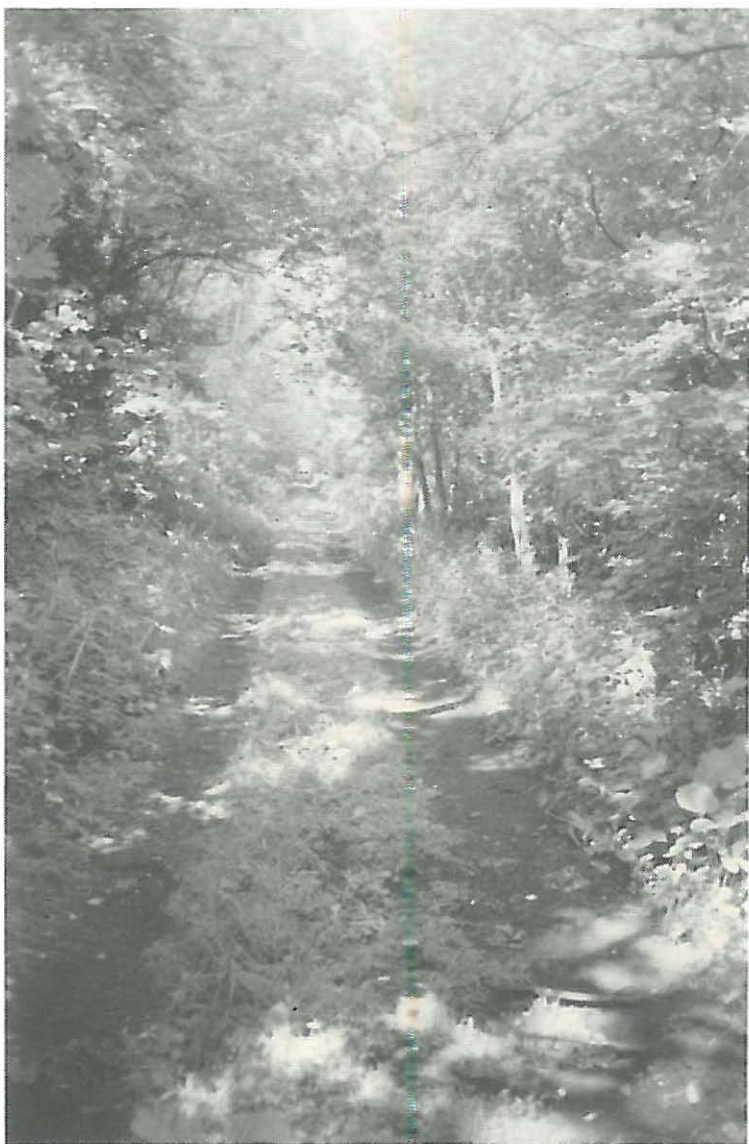
"He is currently studying Chartley's ecology to gain a better understanding of Hokkaido island's 300 peat bogs - among them is Tskukigaumi Mire.

"He is also supporting work being carried out on at Chartley by English Nature and Nottingham University and monitoring equipment from his laboratories has now been installed on the moss."

Dr Takahashi added: "In Japan these habitats are under increasing pressure and what we learn in England will help us protect them."



• The photo shows Dr Takahashi demonstrating the monitoring equipment to Mr Colshaw, left, and Dr Jack Rieley.



Track of the old railway line at
Chartley, near Chartley Moss.

Bog swallowed railway engine

CHARTLEY Moss quaking bog is notorious among locals who speak of a deceptively benign piece of land that once swallowed a railway engine.

The stricken plane landed a few hundred yards short of the Moss proper, where it would almost certainly have sunk with the surviving co-pilot.

A feet-thick carpet of vegetation hides a very deep – some say 50ft – steep-sided pool of water underneath. Scientifically important, its depths have been explored by an aqua-lunged David Bellamy. Too dangerous to be opened to the public, the Moss dates back to the Ice Age and is leased to English Heritage.

Richard Mellor, chief executive of the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, says the Moss is extremely dangerous.

"It is a Ramsar site – a wetland site of national or international importance,"

he said. "It has only recently been designated by English nature."

Ramsar is the Iranian town in which experts gathered in the 1980s for an international conference on wetlands.

"What we have got is a raft of vegetation floating on water. It's next to the old Stafford-to-Derby line and locals say an engine went down the embankment

BY JULIE MARTIN

there and disappeared. Certainly, we have had causeways across there which have sunk. It's extremely dangerous.

"It's a glacial kettle hole, formed as glaciers retreated northwards. Big chunks of ice were left behind, taking a long time to melt, and you were left with a very steep-sided deep hole

which, over time, has stayed full of water and vegetation."

The Moss is home to many rare plant species, including one of Britain's few insectivorous plants, the Sundew, and rare species of dragonfly, including the white-faced darter.

The plane appears to have landed on the fringes of the Moss, where the 'carpet' of

vegetation is thicker. Not much further and it almost certainly would have sunk, he says.

With no streams in and no streams out, the site is vulnerable to pollution.

"What we don't want is fuel oil getting into a rare site like this – it will kill everything it touches and I'm most concerned about that," he added.

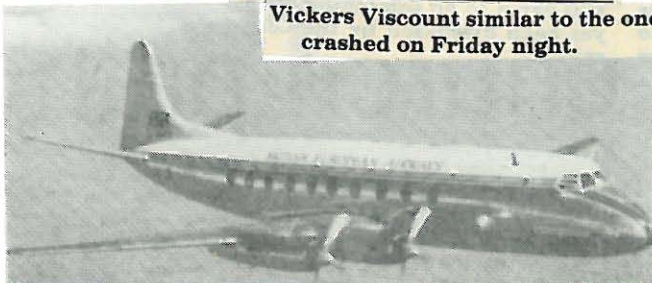


STICK-IN-THE-MUD: A tractor stuck in boggy conditions at the crash site

CHARTLEY AIR CRASH

Post and Times, March 4 1994

Vickers Viscount similar to the one which crashed on Friday night.



INVESTIGATIONS were continuing this week into a mail plane crash near Uttoxeter which killed the aircraft's pilot.

The 36 year old Vickers Viscount was carrying four tons of freight for Parcel Force between Edinburgh and Coventry when it came down at Chartley Moss near Stowe-by-Chartley on Friday night.

The two man crew had tried to make a forced landing after the plane got into difficulties.

The plane crash landed at around 7.50pm and burst into flames after hitting the ground.

Eye witness Ross Naylor, a 16 year old from Hixon said: "I was walking to a friend's house when I heard it. It was about 100 feet up and appeared to be coming down.

"Initially I thought it was an RAF Hercules doing a test

Experts hunt for cause of the crash which claimed a pilot's life

by Rosemarie Davies

run," he said.

Moments later the student heard a noise like a thunderbolt and saw an orange glow in the sky.

Experts from the Air Accident Investigations Board have spent most of the week sifting through the wreckage which was strewn over a wide area.

It will eventually be moved to the board's base at Farnborough for detailed examination.

Vital clues to the cause of the crash may be provided by the co-pilot who is now recovering in hospital from his injuries.

The aircraft is one of ten

owned by British World Airlines based at Southend in Essex.

Company spokesman Malcolm Ginsberg said it was the first time they had had a serious accident with a Viscount.

He said the result of the inquiry would not be expected for several months.

Pilot Beau Winter-Myers, a 32 year old Australian living at Leigh-on-Sea in Essex died in the crash.

His 31 year old co-pilot, Raymond Cole from Hatfield in Hertfordshire was pulled from the wreckage by a farmer.

Police have appealed for sightseers to stay away from the crash site while the investigation is underway.

Miracle escape of co-pilot

A FARMER who was first at the scene of Friday's fatal air crash described the survival of co-pilot Raymond Cole as a miracle.

David Gregory and neighbour Vic Antcliff rushed to the blazing wreck without any fear for their own safety. Rescue workers at the scene billed their actions 'an act of extreme courage'.

David Gregory, 31, of Plough Farm, Drointon, said: "I heard the jet go over. The next minute there was this enormous bang and a terrific glow.

"The sky lit up bright red and yellow. I instantly knew it had crashed and could roughly tell where. My first reaction was to dial 999."

Then he leapt on to his tractor and headed to the blaze. En route, he met up with neighbour Vic Antcliff.

The pair drove to within 50 yards of the plane, from which flames two or three feet high were still leaping, and made their way



Hero: David Gregory

across bogland on foot. "We could see the white cockpit - the plane was much bigger than we envisaged and we thought it must be a passenger carrier. We thought there were going to be a lot of fatalities.

"We got nearer and we heard somebody shouting 'get me out' from the cockpit. We

were amazed - we couldn't see how anyone had survived it.

"Luckily, Vic had taken a torch and we could see this chap a few feet away from us. He was quite fit and active and was able to tell us he'd got a broken arm and possibly broken ribs.

"At that stage, we couldn't reach him. We had to press some debris away to give me enough room to get my arms and shoulders in.

"I pulled him by his good arm until Vic could reach him as well. The co-pilot could push with his feet and we both got hold of him, pulled him free and carried him two or three yards away from the plane." The man, later

named as 39-year-old Raymond Paul Cole, from Hatford, Herts, was still conscious. He even asked his rescuers to help him stand because the ground was wet.

"It was amazing," Mr Gregory added. "It's a miracle anyone got out of that alive."

The co-pilot was ferried to a waiting ambulance and taken to the North Staffordshire Hospital's trauma centre.

Meanwhile, Mr Gregory and a farmer neighbour carried on ferrying workers and gear to the scene until their tractors became bogged down.

One rescue worker said: "It was an act of extreme courage, given the conditions."

I knew it was coming down -

TEENAGER Yori Antcliff was walking the family dogs in Drointon Woods as the plane lost height directly overhead, crashing just 100 yards away.

Just out of his sight, the plane exploded on impact and his parents, Vic and Sue saw the sky light up from their nearby house.

"He had been just about to come back when he heard it come over and saw the search lights on each wing. It was obviously coming down. We

met him on his way back and he told us it was a passenger plane."

Yori, 17, was unhurt and remained in the house with his mother and two brothers while Vic met up with co-rescuer David Gregory.

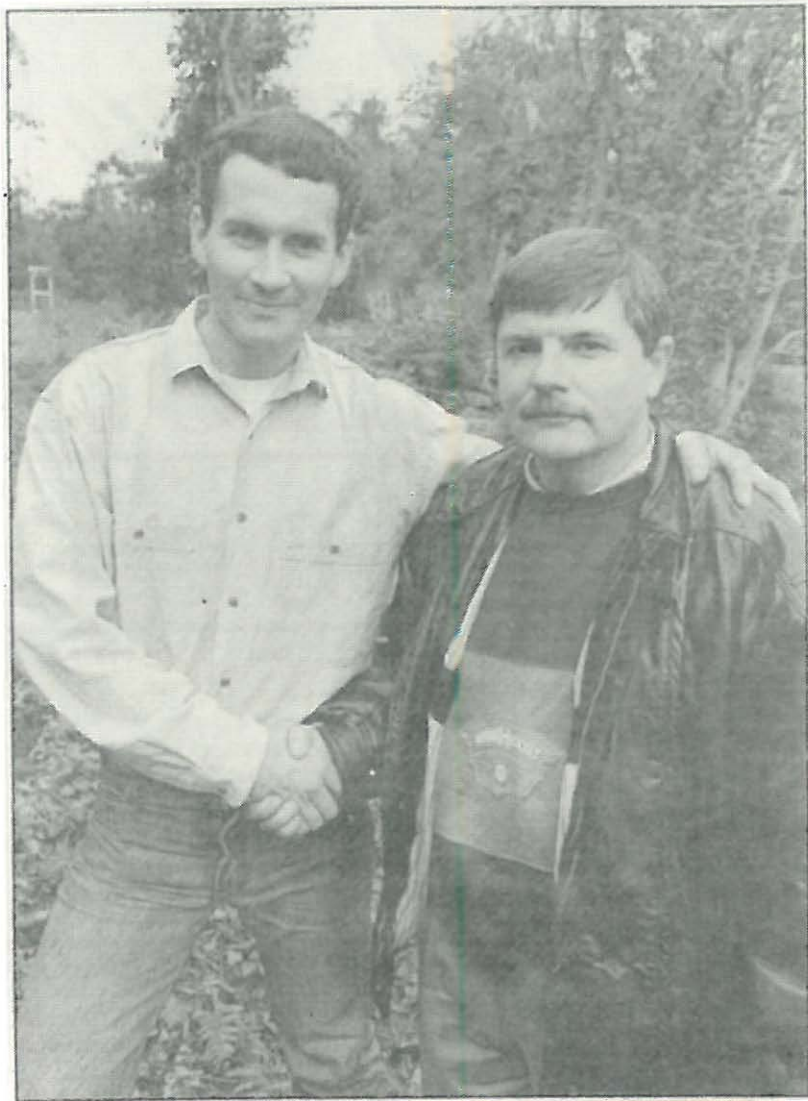
Local expertise and a thorough knowledge of the immediate area then played its part as the men quickly located the wreck, using paths across

the marsh known only to villagers.

Vic, with his four-wheel drive bike, David and neighbouring farmer Brian Woodward with tractors spent the next three hours backing up the emergency services, ferrying vital equipment across the boggy terrain.

"The emergency services were tremendous. They knew exactly what they were doing, there was no shouting and it was very organised and smooth-running," said Vic.

CO-PILOT'S EMOTIONAL RETURN TO STAFFS PLANE CRASH SITE



•Mr Cole is seen (right) shaking hands with David Gregory. Picture by TED BLACK.

EVENING SENTINEL, Monday, September 5, 1994



• The Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, centre, presenting the awards to Mr Antcliff, left, and Mr Gregory.

TWO men who dragged a co-pilot from the blazing wreckage of a crashed aircraft have won the Queen's Commendation for Bravery.

Vic Antcliff and David Gregory pulled Raymond Cole from a cargo aircraft which crashed between Stafford and Uttoxeter.

The actions of two neighbours from Drointon, near Stowe-by-Chartley, saved the life of Mr Cole.

Snowstorm

Australian-born pilot, Beau Winter-Myers, 32, of Essex, died when the Vickers Viscount plunged into wooded Chartley Moss in February, 1994, during a snowstorm.

Mr Antcliff and Mr Gregory, drove to the scene after being alerted by the noise of the crash. The aircraft had erupted in flames but the fire had still not reached the cockpit.

By Rob Cotterill

They heard a voice shouting for help and worked together to move wreckage and rescue Mr Cole. They then returned to try to rescue the pilot who was showing no signs of life and appeared to have been crushed by the frame of the damaged cockpit. Fearing that the turbo-prop aircraft was about to explode they were forced to withdraw to safety.

The pair received the Royal bravery awards from the Lord Lieutenant of Stafford, James Hawley, at a special ceremony in Stafford.

He said: "You were both very brave men. You deserve this award and I am glad that you have got the recognition for what you did."

Mr Gregory said that they were both very proud to have received the bravery awards.

He added: "It was more than two years ago but I can still remember every detail of what happened on that night."

An investigation into the crash blamed engine failure and a series of errors by the crew.

WORKING ON CHARTLEY MOSS

BOB BROOKS' STORY

Chartley Moss, working for Mr. Hurdle,
reclaiming the bog during the war,
the bog vibrating,
recovering a caterpillar tractor,
German bombs on The Moss,
bomb craters not duck ponds,
avoid all green light spots, Italian P.O.W's,
Chartley Moss folklore.

My name is Arthur Robert 'Bob' Brooks. I was one of the last men to work on Chartley Moss before the start of the Second World War. I was born on 21 July 1924 in a little house - one in a row of terraced houses adjoining the Fox & Hounds public house in Great Haywood.

My father, Arthur Frank Brooks had a butcher's shop in the village opposite The Abbey called the Manor House. My mother, Alicia Sarah Brooks, nee Johnson, came from The Hanyards, Tixall. I had one older brother Frank and a sister Mary who is married to Colin Deaville from Grindley.

When my father gave up the butcher's shop we moved to Stowe-by-Chartley where we lived at Broadmoor Cottage. The butcher's shop at Great Haywood was taken over by a Mr. Stubbs. I went to Stowe-by-Chartley School where my teachers were Mr. Prince and a Miss Prince, who surprisingly was no relation to him.

When I was about twelve years old my father started work doing general maintenance on Chartley Moss and the surrounding farmland for Mr. Hurdle, the owner of Marston, Thompson and Evershed's Brewery in Burton-on-Trent.

My father helped to keep the ditches open and eventually became a keeper looking after the pheasants and the woodland as well as his other duties.

Mr. Hurdle had two cottages built on Drointon Common next to the Keepers' Cottage (now known as Moss Rise Farm) and when they were finished he lived in one, Moss View, and we lived in the other, Moss Rise. During the war Mr. Hurdle lived at Moss View. The Keepers' Cottage was let to a family of evacuees.

At thirteen I went to Colwich Church of England School and stayed there until at fourteen I went to work for Mr. Hurdle. I was employed like my father to work on The Moss. It was 1938. Mr. Hurdle managed a small farm and a shooting estate. The work consisted mainly of fencing, digging and clearing ditches, and scything parts of The Moss to keep the rides clear for the shooters. The pathways were scythed to a width of twelve feet.

When the war came it was to alter Chartley Moss considerably. The Government required farmers to turn as much land as possible over to producing food so that the country could become self-sufficient. The woodland round The Moss had to be cleared to grow potatoes and corn.

Mr. Hurdle purchased a Ferguson tractor for which we had a ration of two hundred gallons of petrol per month. It was dyed red to prevent anyone trying to use it in private vehicles.

The Ferguson tractor was one of the first of its kind in Staffordshire with a hydraulic lift plough. It was an excellent tractor in every way but we were asking too much of it in pulling out stumps or trees. A ratchet monkey-jack was used to lift the stumps - mostly from oak and larch trees which had been felled during the 1914-18 war but which were still very sound.

The method was to dig round the stump, find a suitable arm or thick root, stand the jack on a large iron plate under it and then extend the jack arm to give more leverage.

I was one of three workers who strained and pulled in a pump-like action to rock the stump while the small monkey-jack would lift up the stump. Many of the stumps were well over a ton in weight with all the marl and soil attached. This had to be removed by hand so that the little Ferguson tractor could move the stumps. Bags of sand were placed over the radiator to prevent it rearing up when it was prising out the stumps. It was a slow job.

Hardings Wood was cleared and fourteen acres converted to crop land. Then another eight acres were reclaimed. Gradually we got closer and closer to The Moss.

In the end a firm of contractors was called in who blasted the stumps and used two steam traction engines to pull the stumps out. They were driven by two men, Sid and Harry, who if they were lucky averaged fifty stumps a day. The contractors were paid 6s.0d. a stump - 30 pence in today's money. We had to go round counting the holes left by the stumps. I had to plough and clear the land when they were finished. In all we reclaimed twenty-two acres of firm land.

Our next site, known as the Bus Piece, was very peaty and covered in rhododendrons. The little 'Fergie' when ploughing had one set of wheels in the furrow made in the previous plough run, but it was always getting stuck up to its front axle in the peat.

Mr. Hurdle purchased an American R2 caterpillar tractor which, because of its tracks similar to those on a tank, was able to travel on top of the peat. It pulled a single digger - an international plough with an extra shell-board bolted on top.

It turned a good furrow and buried everything. Certain areas of The Moss were wired off with electric fencing to let the cattle graze while keeping them out of the ditches. A herd of fifty-two Hereford cattle was wintered in the woods at Chartley Moss with just the odd bale of straw. How they survived the winter was a miracle.

Four five-ton solid oak ex-Leyland lorry bodies were dropped over the wide peat dykes to form bridges; later they were to prove helpful in getting the caterpillar into parts of The Moss. Each morning the cattle were checked in case any were stuck in the bog. My little terrier dog would search through the heather and scrub and if she found an animal in difficulties would stay with it, barking to attract my attention. Often the beast would sink up to its belly and by the time it was discovered had eaten all vegetation within reach. The ground was very dangerous once the top was penetrated and it was a case of 'in with the caterpillar and slings' to get the animal out. A trailer was useless as the wheels sank into the ground. On one occasion a five-barred gate was used as a sledge to roll the animal on and tow it clear. Otherwise as they struggled to stand they went in again. The cattle were quick learners and very soon knew which parts of the bog to avoid.

Trees 'danced' some forty yards ahead to the vibration of the caterpillar and water would ripple in the ditches under the pressure. The two strands of fencing wire round the dangerous parts would slap together as the posts rose up and down in the sponge. Fencing was easy - one would find a tree every fifty or sixty yards to pull the wire taut - then literally push a post in every five yards and staple it to the wire to hold it upright and carry the insulators. Suction did the rest. The whole area was like a giant vibrating sponge. This site was four hundred yards from the actual bog or moss and not in the National Trust Area.

There used to be an old oak cabin near the site - an old railway carriage used for a Shooters' hut - alongside was the Cabin Ride. The cabin had been brought there towed on sledges by horses.

Despite the sponginess I ploughed an area of four acres. It was rolled and then seeded but the seed didn't take. On trying again in the Spring all the surface vegetation had rotted.

One day when I drove the caterpillar on to the peat area it started to sink until the seat of the machine was level with the vegetation. I left the engine running and called for help from the other men working on the site. The men dug out behind the caterpillar to lay a platform of railway sleepers under the tracks of the caterpillar. They found that the caterpillar had come to rest on a large jet black oak butt two and a half feet below the surface. A couple of neighbouring farmers came with their tractors to help but they couldn't get within thirty yards of the caterpillar. A pulley was attached to a large tree on an embankment opposite the machine and a long wire rope attached via the pulley to enable the tractors to pull on sound ground. With the tractors taking the strain I climbed back on board. A hand clutch made it easier to operate and, if necessary, abandon. At a given signal I engaged reverse and with both tractors pulling I rocked back on to the sleepers and climbed out. The site is still there, overgrown with birch and ling, but can still be seen by any disbeliever. Just opposite I have pushed a set of drain rods in the ground - once through the top the easier they go.

I have since been given to understand that in the actual Moss there is an area of fifteen feet thick mass of floating vegetation over a basin of water fifty feet deep.

Thinking back I must have been either suicidal or insane to have attempted such a task. My starting wage on The Moss was six shillings a week. The full agricultural wage was thirty-six shillings a week. Life was never dull with plenty of incidents.

During the war The Moss was a chance victim of enemy action. One night, for some inexplicable reason, a German bomber dropped an incendiary bomb on The Moss setting it on fire. It dropped on the left-hand side of the deep dyke on Sammons Ride near the Bus Piece. As it was burning towards the ditch we let the fire take its course. A stretch of about twenty yards was burnt to a depth of three feet. As it smouldered it dried the peat alongside which eventually caught fire itself. The top would give way exposing the white ash underneath. The fire burnt for three weeks before burning itself out. Many local people will remember the night when four high explosive bombs were dropped in The Moss, three of which exploded. The fourth embedded itself near Hodgkin's cowshed but failed to explode. We all thought the bombs were miles away as we only heard dull thuds, the soft peat had absorbed the impact. Next morning we had acquired three more 'duck ponds'! The original duck pond belonged to the shoot but a ditch had been dug and it was drained. The craters were twelve to fourteen feet deep. One of them is actually on Sammons Ride. The blast and the shrapnel had sheared off the trees and bushes around the craters. Two of the bomb holes were in the part taken over by the National Trust close to the dry duck pond, not very deep but twenty to thirty yards across. I hope these have been marked on the Ordnance Survey maps as bomb holes and not put down to depressions or quagmires for the want of correct information. The same goes for the parts set on fire, the whole area collapsed leaving a deep gully along the drain side.

The actual moss basin is very dangerous unless you know it or have a guide. The remaining clear pool is half the size it was which means that the floating mass is converging and will soon be lost for ever unless steps are taken to prevent this. One original pool is already coated over and became a floating lawn so you have a floating raft over fifty feet of water covering several acres. Scotch firs reproduce themselves and live until the roots reach the acid water below. These spots are very dangerous. When a tree blows over it pulls a mat of vegetation some four or five yards square with it leaving an exposed murky sump hole. The sump holes are light green in colour compared to the rest of the vegetation which is dark green, so the advice was always to avoid all light green spots and keep moving.

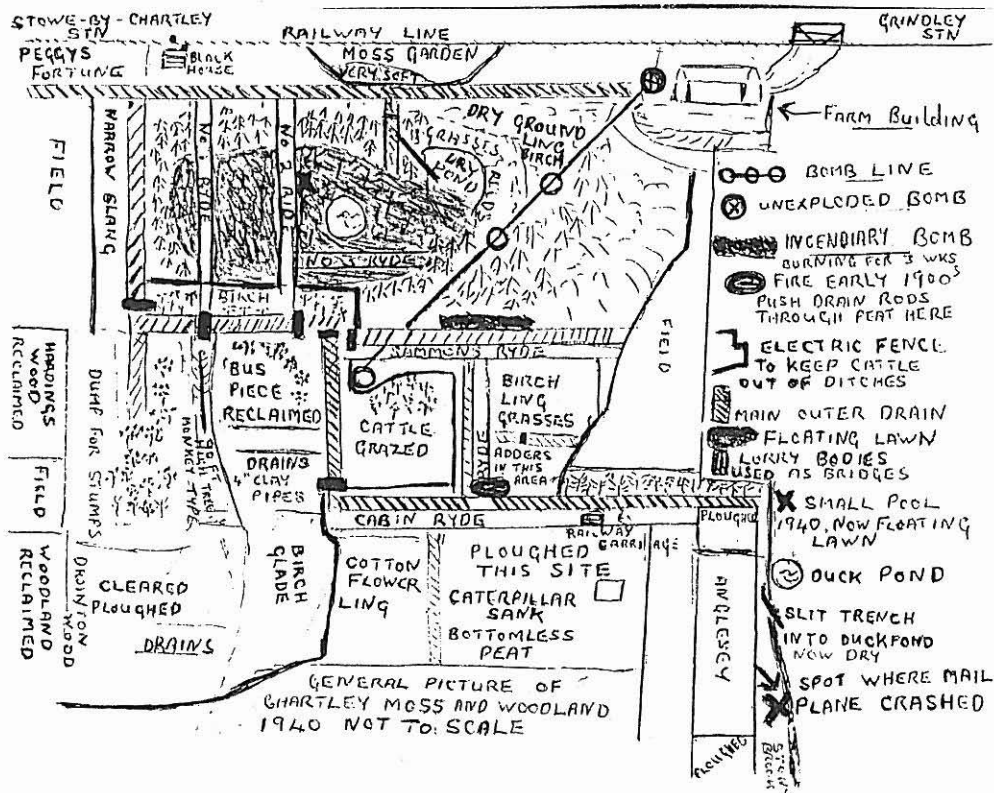
Permission to visit Chartley Moss must be obtained at all times from the National Trust. Wellingtons are essential, more so in hot weather as adders are plentiful when you know where to look. Dogs should be left at home. I've had two dogs bitten under the jaw - both survived after injections but were a sorry sight with large swollen heads and unable to eat for a couple of days.

Italian prisoners-of-war were used to clear the drains round The Moss. It didn't seem to have any effect on the water level to The Moss.

There are all sorts of rumours about Chartley Moss. One story has a lady and some hounds who disappeared into it. Another has a bulldozer sinking into The Moss during the laying of pipes by British Gas. Yet another piece of folklore is that a railway engine disappeared into the bog, which is quite feasible as the line is less than two hundred yards from the basin. While I worked there I never heard any of these stories - they all seem to have come to light after I left the area.

Now all those areas we ploughed up seem to have gone back to their natural state.

After the war the Keepers' Cottage became known as Moss Rise Farm and was let to a Mr. Bosson together with the reclaimed acres so it meant we were no longer required. The tractors and equipment were sold and I moved on.



A GENERAL PLAN OF CHARTLEY MOSS AND WOODLAND
AROUND 1940 DRAWN BY BOB BROOKS

TOM HODGKINS' STORY

Keeper's Cottage, Brocton Gravel Company,
Old Toll House, Chartley Manor, Park Hall,
Chartley Moss and its mysteries,
visit to The Plough at Amerton that changed my life,
Dickie Fenton race-horse owner,
slaughter-house at Weston, Caretaker at
County Showground.

My name is Tom Hodgkins. I was born on 17 April 1923 at Cheddleton, near Leek. In 1938 my family moved to the Keeper's Cottage, Chartley. At that time the Keeper's Cottage was on the main Stafford-Uttoxeter road and nearly opposite the General's Farmhouse. In the 1960's the main road was straightened and the old road past the Keeper's Cottage is now a quiet cul-de-sac. My father William Hodgkins had a small-holding near The Plough Inn at Amerton.

Later my father worked at Brocton, Stafford for the Brocton Gravel Company. He was a top notch engineer.

During the Second World War there was a storage area for bombs at Amerton just off the Stafford-Uttoxeter road opposite the turning for Stowe by Chartley. Further along the main road towards Uttoxeter at the next turning for Stowe was the Old Toll House where Bob Massey and his family lived. Mr. Massey worked on the Chartley Estate for Major Congreve of Chartley Hall.

About a mile further on the road was the black and white Chartley Manor Farm where Mr. Armett lived and farmed six hundred acres leased from the Chartley Estate. The farm was sold to Lord Shrewsbury and later he sold it to Mr. Thornby.

After the Second World War Graham Allen, who was already a tenant farmer on the Chartley Estate, moved into Chartley Manor. His son Jeremy lives there today. Close by Chartley Manor are some old stables which have now been converted into mews-type dwellings. Next door are two adjoining cottages. I live in the first one with my wife Sarah.

The cottage we live in and some stables nearby belonged to Park Hall which stood on the nearby Park Hill. Part of a wall which used to surround the property is still there and the iron gates to the long drive up to it. The original Hall was about half the size of Weston Hall five miles away. Nuttals lived at Park Hall. The Hall is now gone and a bungalow built on the site.



PARK HALL, PARK HILL, CHARTLEY

Half a mile across the fields is Chartley Moss. It used to be much smaller - more like a large duck-pond. Mr. Hurdle, who owned the Moss, used Italian Prisoners of War to clean out the drains and keep the ditches open. They haven't been cleared for nearly fifty years and that in my opinion is why Chartley Moss now covers such a large area.

When pipes were being laid for North Sea Gas a big caterpillar tractor with a hoist sank in the bog and disappeared without trace.

In 1949 I was all set to emigrate to New Zealand to start a new life. I was in The Plough at Amerton having a drink when I was introduced to a young woman from Northumberland who worked at Sandon Hall for Lord and Lady Harrowby. She was Sarah Elizabeth Cardwell. She changed my life. We have been married forty six years.

At that time Bill Williams was landlord at The Plough. His parents kept The Cock Inn at Stowe by Chartley. There was another pub - The Cross Keys - at Stowe at that time. It closed in 1930 and is now a private home.

For a while I was a tenant farmer on a forty nine acre farm.

On the way to Stafford and the County Showground is Weston Hall. Dicky Fenton the race-horse owner lived there. He kept a slaughter-house in a building to the side of the Hall and was a supplier of dog food.

I have been Caretaker at the County Showground for more years than I care to remember.



Chartley Manor Farm.

Chartley Manor Farm is an early Elizabethan manor once part of the Chartley Hall Estate. Chartley Hall was the main residence of the Earls of Essex. Their descendants, the de Ferrers family, sold off Chartley Estate in 1904. Manor Farm along with thirty four other farms and eight public houses were auctioned off. At the time of the sale Manor Farm was let to a Mr. J. Salisbury. Presumably the farm was bought by Thomas Armett as his name appears in Kelly's Directories between 1912 and 1940. Chartley Manor is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Jeremy Allen. Last year (1997) the Allens opened up their Drawing Room as an olde world tea room which is proving very popular.

STAFFORDSHIRE,

Between Stafford and Uttoxeter,

About 5 miles North-East of the County Town, 5 miles South-West of Uttoxeter, 6 miles from Stone, and 16 miles from Lichfield; while the Ingestre and Chartley Stations on the Stafford and Uttoxeter branch of the Great Northern Railway, and the Hixon and Weston Stations on the North Staffordshire Railway, are all adjacent to the Estate. The Main Line at Stafford may thus be reached in a few minutes, whence the journey to Manchester may be accomplished in 1½ hours, Birmingham in one hour, and London in about 2½ hours.

Particulars, Plans, Views and Conditions of Sale,
OF THE
MAGNIFICENT SPORTING DOMAIN
KNOWN AS THE
Chartley Castle Estate

EXTENDING OVER AN AREA OF NEARLY

8,000 ACRES,

Including the Lordships of several Manors, and comprising an

INTERESTING AND HISTORICAL FAMILY MANSION,

DISTINGUISHED AS

"CHARTLEY CASTLE,"

Built in the Domestic Gothic style of architecture, surrounded by a Moat, and containing ENTRANCE HALL, four RECEPTION ROOMS, BILLIARD ROOM, 11 PRINCIPAL BED and DRESSING ROOMS, 18 SECONDARY and SERVANTS' BED ROOMS, commodious DOMESTIC OFFICES, and extensive CELLARAGE.

The Stabling affords accommodation for 11 Horses.

THE PLEASURE GROUNDS

Are extensive and well matured, and are replete with historical associations. They include spacious LAKE and BOAT HOUSE, with good VEGETABLE and FRUIT GARDEN; while beyond the Pleasure Grounds is the well-known "Chartley Park," with its famous herd of Wild Cattle. The Estate also comprises a moderate sized and well-equipped

Hunting Residence, known as "Parkhill,"

34 PASTORAL DAIRY FARMS,

All with excellent homesteads, and served by good roads.

8 Fully-licensed Public Houses and Beer Houses;

Together with numerous Enclosures of Accommodation Land and small Holdings near the Villages of Stowe, Drinton, Hixon, Amerton, and Weston-upon-Trent,

The whole producing an actual and fairly estimated Rental value of upwards of

£11,000 per Annum.

MESSRS. WALTON & LEE

Have received instructions to offer the above for SALE BY AUCTION,

At the "Swan" Hotel, Stafford,

On Thursday and Friday, 15th and 16th of September, 1904,

AT TWO O'CLOCK PRECISELY ON EACH DAY,

In a number of Convenient Lots (unless acceptable offers be previously made by Private Treaty).

Copies of these Particulars (Price 6s. each) may be obtained of Messrs. SMITH, MAMMATT & HALE, Solicitors, Ashby-de-la-Zouch; Messrs. JOHN GERMAN & SON, Land Agents, Ashby-de-la-Zouch; or of the AUCTIONEERS, at their Offices,

10, Mount Street, Grosvenor Square, London, W.

Orders to View the Lots may be obtained from Messrs. JOHN GERMAN & SON, Ashby-de-la-Zouch.

YACKEE & SONS, Printers, Westminster.

8 T

ACCIDENTS ON THE A518

Between December 1990 and November 1995 I came upon a number of serious accidents on my journey either to or from work in Stafford or to or from home in Uttoxeter. I cannot remember the dates or the years but often like other motorists I had to make a diversion. The following are some of the accidents I encountered:

1. A car embedded in the front of a Shell petrol tanker on the switch-back bend at Tunnel Bank. It was about 4 p.m. and broad daylight.
2. A car embedded in the front of a cattle truck near the garage at Gravelly Bank. It was 8.25 a.m. in Autumn and the road was covered in thick fog.
3. Another time on that same straight stretch I saw a car embedded in a tree not far from the garage.
4. One summer evening on my way to work at about 6.30 p.m. I came upon a car on its roof on the Stafford side of Loxley Hall. The driver incredibly was on his feet and uninjured.
This was before the road was improved on this stretch.
5. One morning on my way to work I had to make a long detour because of a serious accident at Chartley Bend when a car and a van collided.

Fortunately none of these accidents was fatal but the injuries and the shock suffered by some of the people involved must have been horrendous.

There were other accidents during this time, some of them fatal and some of these have already been recorded in this book. Chartley Bend or Chartley Bank seems to have had more than its fair share of accidents.

CHARTLEY BANK ACCIDENTS

Chartley Bank with its series of bends between two straight stretches of road has been the scene of numerous accidents over many years, many of them fatal.

Staffordshire County Council Highways Department, now named Development Services, provided me with the following information:

PERSONAL INJURY ACCIDENTS AT CHARTLEY BANK

16.5.1984	1 person slight injury
24.5.1984	4 persons serious injury, 1 person slight injury
29.5.1984	2 persons slight injury
4.6.1988	1 person slight injury
10.3.1992	1 person slight injury
15.3.1992	1 person slight injury
14.5.1993	1 person serious injury, 1 person slight injury
9.7.1993	1 person slight injury
21.5.1994	1 person slight injury
21.6.1994	1 person slight injury
1.9.1994	3 persons suffered serious injury
12.9.1994	1 person slight injury
14.1.1995	1 person slight injury
13.2.1995	1 person slight injury
18.6.1995	2 persons slight injury
26.8.1995	1 person slight injury
1.10.1995	2 persons slight injury
8.10.1997	1 person slight injury

ACCIDENTS AT CHARTLEY BANK

On Friday January 8, 1971 at 11.45 a.m. a 29 year old male driver was killed and his female passenger was seriously injured at Chartley Bend. A female passenger aged 21 was seriously injured. No other vehicle was involved.

On Thursday October 18, 1973 at 7.40 a.m. a 20 year old woman was killed when the bus in which she was a passenger in collided with a heavy goods vehicle at Chartley Bank.

The 24 year old driver of the goods vehicle, the 49 year old bus driver and a 47 year old female passenger suffered serious injuries. Daylight with snow/ice.

On Friday March 11, 1983 at 11.10 a.m. a male driver aged 37 and a male driver aged 62 suffered fatal injuries when their goods vehicles collided at Chartley Bank.

On Friday May 14, 1993 at 8.25 a.m. a male driver aged 32 suffered a serious injury when his car collided with another car near Chartley.

On Thursday October 27, 1983 at 8.15 a.m. a 53 year old male driver and his 58 year old female passenger were killed when the car in which they were travelling collided with a goods vehicle at Chartley Bank.

A 22 year old female passenger in the car suffered a serious injury. Two dogs in the car also died. Daylight condition and road wet.

On Sunday October 30, 1983 a 56 year old female passenger was killed when the car in which she was travelling collided with another car at Chartley Bank. Darkness condition and road wet.

On Thursday May 24, 1984 at 9.17 p.m. a male driver aged 23, a male driver aged 22 and a male passenger aged 27 suffered serious injuries when two cars collided near Chartley.

On Sunday March 1, 1998 at 8.50 p.m. a 36 year old male driver of a car suffered a fatal injury at Chartley Bank. No other vehicle was involved.

On Wednesday March 25, 1998 at 2.58 p.m. a 45 year old male driver was killed when the car he was travelling in collided with a vehicle over 1.5 tons at Chartley Bank.

On Friday March 11, 1983 at 2.58 p.m. a male driver aged 62 and a male driver aged 37 were killed when their goods vehicles collided on the A518 between Station Road and Bridge Lane.

New demands for death road action

By Alasdair McGeogor

FRESH demands have been made for safety improvements to a stretch of road near Stafford which has now seen two deaths in three weeks.

An horrific accident between a car and lorry on the A518 outside Chartley Castle has sparked fears for motorists.

Brian Tester, 61, from the Republic of Ireland died at the scene following last Wednesday's accident. His Nissan car collided with a lorry carrying sheepskins.

Earlier in March, RAF serviceman Kevin Watkins perished when his car careered off the road at virtually the same spot.

"It's carnage. People are being killed on that road virtually in the same spot," said Brendan McKeown, chairman of Stowe Parish Council.

"I did say a few weeks ago it was time to re-visit the site, then a couple of weeks later there is another fatality. It does beg the question what is the problem?"

"This has got to be looked at with some urgency and it can't just be dismissed by saying 'we haven't got the money for it'."

Mr McKeown appreciated the road would not be suitable for traffic calming but called for more signs to warn of the dangers.

Mr Tester, from County Cork, was visiting his sister in Telford. He was born in Walsall.

This week, highways bosses said they were carrying out a safety review of the whole A518 between Stafford and Uttoxeter.

"We are looking with the police at this stretch of road and are considering it for speed camera deployment," said Geoff Wright, assistant county surveyor at Staffordshire County Council.

"We are conscious of the fact there have been two fatal accidents along there.

"It is most unlikely there is anything wrong with the carriageway. We will be looking for other factors."

Improvement work was carried out on the Chartley stretch of road about two years ago, including resurfacing work.

Mr Wright stressed there was no money in the highways department's capital fund to carry out road improvements. But he said the safety review could lead to a variety of measures.

Mr Tester's death marked the fourteenth personal injury in five years along that specific stretch. There have been two deaths, two serious injuries and 10 minor injuries. Three of the accidents happened after the improvements.

At the start of the A518 in Stafford there are warning signs which refer to 398 road casualties in three years.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS PART ONE

I would like to thank all those who helped me in the preparation of this book. It would be impossible to name them all as I must have spoken to over a hundred people during the past seven years.

I would particularly like to thank the following people who went out of their way to help me:

Doug Durose of Lower Tean who responded to my initial idea with enthusiasm and supplied me with a list of people, places and possible stories;

Miss Beck of Uttoxeter for her letters, advice and the loan of articles;

Jackie and Reg Durose of Grindley for their help and the loan of old photos of the Clog & Knocker line;

Delia and Jesse Brough of Burndhurst Mill for their help and interest;

John Walker, Uttoxeter author and historian for his anecdotes, information and support;

The late Colin Deaville and his wife Mary of Uttoxeter for their enthusiasm and support; the use of Colin's postcards, press cuttings and his help with drawing maps and identifying places along the A518;

Mr. Cattermole, Headteacher (now retired) and Mrs. Jackie Orme, Head's Secretary, Loxley Hall School;

Keith Myatt of Midland Red Stevensons;

Bryan Yates, local historian of Rugeley who is currently writing a history of the Green Bus Company;

Graham Hodgkins, John Schofield and James Turner of the Home Office;

Harry Wood and Claire Bailey of TNT, Marchington;

I would like to thank all those who so willingly contributed their stories and who patiently put up with my return visits and telephone calls. In particular I would like to thank the following:

The late Harold Whittaker and Nola Whittaker of Loxley for the use of their scrap books of press cuttings and their postcards;

Richard Statham of Bramshall for his keen interest and support, the use of items from his collection of scrapbooks, sight of his maps and documents and the use of photos;

John Fisher of Rugeley whose contributions on the Fisher family of Burndhurst Mill and Blythe Bridge exceeded my wildest expectations;

Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell for their permission to include the pages about their daughter Susan;

Tom Goode of Denstone for his keen interest and help and for his very interesting contribution;

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Staffordshire Newsletter, the Evening Sentinel, the Express and Star, Uttoxeter Advertiser, Uttoxeter Post and Times, Burton Daily Mail for permission to use cuttings from their publications;

Nature Conservancy Council for the West Midland Region and Tim Coleslaw, Site Manager of Chartley Moss;

I do hope I have not missed out anyone and if I have I would ask them to please accept my apologies;

Betty Chaddock who patiently typed the endless scripts and who put up with the numerous alterations and additions to texts without complaint;

Finally, my wife Christine and daughter Laura-Jane, who had to put up with my constant writing, phone calls and dashing off to interview someone or photograph some part of the road.

It's been a long journey. I've met a lot of people. On occasions I would have liked to have included people but for their own reasons they did not wish to be included and I respected their wishes. Sometimes it was a case of our paths not crossing or for some reason being unable to meet. I am sure that I will hear about people I should have included but did not know about, but that is life. I hope you enjoy this first part of the book. I have enjoyed writing it.

Stafford
July 1998

Jifoley@aol.com

**I am sure you will find the personal stories in this second part
Just as interesting as those in the first part of The Road to
Chartley.**

Jim Foley Autumn 2001 (Re-printed Spring 2004.)